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Un/Mediated: Access to Human Rights Records in Context

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Un/Mediated: Access to Human Rights Records in Context

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Abstract

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This thesis, based upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted at the Guatemalan National Police Archive in Guatemala City (AHPN), explores how knowledge of archival context is instantiated within the AHPN's reference processes. The AHPN, an archive that has re-created the original record keeping of the National Police, has also created specific tools and behaviors that allow archivists to successfully search through the archive. By focusing upon tacit decision-making processes of reference archivists in the completion of responding to information requests, I demonstrate how archivists translate discrete pieces of information into the hierarchical structure of the Guatemalan National Police Archive. By placing the work processes of the reference archivist within the larger context of the archive, I demystify the processes of searching for information while firmly establishing the value of archival context in creating meaning from the archive. Within this thesis, I highlight key elements of archival context that aid reference archivists in their search for documents, with the intention of opening up opportunities for users to employ these same methods within their own research projects.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction; Or, The Archivist’s Dilemma.....	1
Archival Context	2
Maintaining Provenance and Original Order through Arrangement	4
Navigating the Archive: The Role of Reference Services	7
Conclusion: Context as Opportunity	12
THE GUATEMALAN NATIONAL POLICE ARCHIVE	14
The Guatemalan National Police: A brief history.....	14
The Structures and Recordkeeping of the National Police	18
The Archive of the National Police: Discovery and Pre-Archive.....	21
The Present Day AHPN	23
The Physical Space of the Archive	23
Archival Processing	24
Uses of the Archive.....	25
Outreach and Access to Information.....	25
Legal Uses of the Archive.....	27
The Birth of the Digital Archive	28
Conclusion: The Ongoing Process of Archival Thinking	31
METHODOLOGY	33
The Archive as a Research Site	33
Methodological Approach	35
Data Collection	37
Field Work and Observation	37
Recordings and Field Notes	40
Data Analysis	41
Coding Transcripts and Interviews	41

Developing Diagrams:	
Finding Moments of Contextual Breakthrough	43
OVERVIEW OF REFERENCE ACTIVITIES	45
Introduction: Context as a Point of Entry	45
From Request to Response: An Overview of the Reference Process	46
The Technological Tools of the Archive	46
From Request to Response.....	51
Developing a Search	59
Sample Search: Looking for a Specific Person.....	64
Sample Search: Finding the Cofradia	70
Conclusion: Fostering Archival Literacy.....	75
Fostering Archival Literacy	76
THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF THE AHPN: TRANSLATING THE WORK OF THE REFERENCE ARCHIVIST	78
Introduction: Challenges of Using the Digital Archive	78
Search Capability	79
User Interface	80
Finding a Point of Entry.....	83
Translating the Work of the Reference Archivist to the Digital Archive	84
User Guides and External (Secondary) Sources	84
Understanding and Employing Reference Guides	85
Developing Familiarity with Archival Context	87
CONCLUSION: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHIVES	89
Providing Access, In Context	89
Digital Access and the ‘Price of Admission’	90
Further Avenues for Research	90
References.....	92

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 The Hierarchical Structure of Archival Arrangement within the AHPN	5
Figure 1.2 Screenshot of the Digital Archive of the AHPN, showing the finding aid for the General Directorate	7
Figure 2.1 Organizational Chart for the National Police, 1983	16
Figure 2.2 Example of a Ficha	20
Figure 4.1 Ficha for Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán.....	48
Figure 4.2 An Overview of the Reference Process in the Access to Information Unit	53
Figure 4.3 Images of an Information Solicitation (courtesy of archivohistoricopn.org).....	54
Figure 4.4 An Overview of the Search Process	60
Figure 4.5 Searching for a User's File.....	66
Figure 4.6 Searching for La Cofradia.....	72
Figure 5.1 A screenshot of the Digital Archive showing the collapsible menu and document list.....	80
Figure 5.2 Screenshot of the Digital Archive showing search results when searching for a name, in this case “Jacobo Arbenz Guzman”	82
Figure 5.3 Screenshot showing document browser of the Digital Archive and tabbed browsing of documents	82

INTRODUCTION

“Here then, is the supreme and most difficult task of the Archivist—to hand on the documents as nearly as possible in the state in which he received them, without adding or taking away, physically or morally, anything: to preserve unviolated, without the possibility of a suspicion of violation, every element in them.”

– Hilary Jenkinson, “Reflections of an Archivist”

INTRODUCTION; OR, THE ARCHIVIST’S DILEMMA

Guatemala’s Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN) presents an intriguing case in the challenges of archival reference services. The archive is home to documents detailing a century of human rights abuses, including forced disappearances, torture, and operations to remove “subversives” from the country amidst a Cold War panic. Users come to the archive seeking documentation of these disappearances, looking for closure on what happened to loved ones who left one evening and never returned, or to link forensic evidence from exhumed bodies to records present within the archive. Yet, finding specific records within the archive can amount to locating a needle in a haystack—how, amongst 80 million documents, can one name be located?

In this thesis, I examine how Reference Staff at the AHPN use archival context to locate documents in response to user requests. The structures and functions of the archive that can make it opaque to users are the very tools that make Reference Archivists successful when searching through the archive. First, I introduce the concept of archival context, its relationship to maintaining evidential value and the preservation of context through provenance and original order in archival arrangement. After providing background information on the National Police and the archival standards in place at the AHPN that retain knowledge of these structures, I examine the search tactics of Reference Archivists at the AHPN, highlighting moments where knowledge of the archive’s context enables more successful searching strategies. In the next chapter, I discuss how awareness of archival context can be applied to the Digital Archive of the AHPN, and apply the search tactics of Reference Archivists to the Digital Archive as a

method of enhancing the search process of users. In the conclusion, I expand on the importance of further avenues for research into Reference Services in human rights archives, including ethical concerns, user studies, and the teaching of archival literacy.

ARCHIVAL CONTEXT

In order to understand the structures of the AHPN, one must first be familiar with the governing principles of archives and how they preserve the context of a record's creation. This section introduces the concept of archival context and how it informs the arrangement of archives. Archives and the records they preserve possess two very specific values: evidential and informational. Evidential value is context based, and is defined as “the quality of records that provides information about the origins, functions, and activities of their creator.”¹ Records are only capable of providing this information if links are maintained to key external (people, functions, and legislation that shaped the way the organization operates) and internal contexts (recordkeeping systems). For example, records and their relationship to other records (internal context) tell one part of the story about their creator: how they produced information, types of information they valued, and how they preserved said information through their recordkeeping systems. Informational value is “the usefulness or significance of materials based on their content, independent of any intrinsic or evidential value,” or information that may be gleaned from reading and analyzing a specific record.²

Maintaining context is the crux of the archival endeavor. Within archives, preserving the context of a record is fundamental to preserving its capacity for meaning and understanding.³ Archival context is fundamentally the who, what, when, where, why and how of the record. When examining records for the first time, archivists must ask themselves “to whom did this record belong? In what context was it created, used, and

¹ Richard. Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).

² Ibid.

³ Kate Theimer, “Archives in Context and as Context,” *Journal of Digital Humanities*, June 26, 2012, <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-2/archives-in-context-and-as-context-by-kate-theimer/>.

kept? Which functions did it serve?” These questions, the heart of archival context, allow the archivist to determine how an individual record is connected to other records within the same collection, and allows the bonds between records to be preserved.⁴

As mentioned previously, there are two specific types of context that govern the structure of archives: external context, forces, and structures that governed the originating body⁵ of the records; and internal context, or the filing/recordkeeping system of the creator. External context is the organic relationship between records and their creator, such as their activities and functions, and forces, such as time, place, and legislation or behaviors that shaped the organization’s work, that were responsible for shaping the record’s creation and use. Internal context refers to the original filing system or informational flow of the organization/recordkeeping body. Internal context is how the organization of the institution impacted recordkeeping, who was responsible for creating, managing, and sharing specific records, how information was transmitted amongst departments, and how and where records were stored. When examining these internal and external contexts, archivists attempt to replicate these original structures and recordkeeping systems as closely as possible, to preserve their original meanings for future research.

This context is instantiated through two key archival principles: provenance and original order. Provenance, otherwise referred to as *respect des fonds*, is one of the means through which external context is maintained. Provenance dictates that record groups belonging to separate institutions or institutional departments should not be co-mingled.⁶ As an example, within the AHPN, the General Director’s records are not

⁴ Luciana Duranti, “The Archival Bond,” *Archives and Museum Informatics* 11, no. 3–4 (September 1, 1997): 213–18, doi:10.1023/A:1009025127463.

⁵ The ‘originating body’ is the person, organization, or governing body that produced, maintained, and kept the records when they were actively being used (i.e., before arriving at the archive). While these bodies could be individuals, such as authors, family papers, or artists, the term “organization” will be used more frequently throughout the thesis as it focuses upon an organization (the National Police) that produced and maintained records.

⁶ Shelley Sweeney, “The Ambiguous Origins of the Archival Principle of ‘Provenance,’” *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 43, no. 2 (2008): 193–213.

combined with the General Secretary's records, as these two individuals served separate functions within the National Police and maintained their records separately. Additionally, the records of the National Police should not be mixed with records belonging to another institution, such as the military, in order to preserve both of these archives original structures.

Original order requires the archivist to organize records to reflect the creator's original filing systems as closely as possible. Original order stems from the notion of "archival bond," that each record has a direct relationship to the records it was kept with in its original filing system.⁷ The purpose of maintaining original order when arranging archives is to ensure that the context that went into the initial creation and maintenance of the records are preserved, and that no contextual meaning is lost due to an archivist re-arranging or re-grouping materials.⁸ In order to recreate the original order of documents, archivists rely upon internal contextual information: knowledge of how the inner-workings of the creating body produced and managed the records they created. Original order is a granular, item-level recreation of the creator's original filing system.

Maintaining Provenance and Original Order through Arrangement

Provenance and original order are preserved through the arrangement of archival collections. Arrangement, the process of organizing records with respect to original order and provenance,⁹ physically structures the collections according to the original recordkeeping principles and systems of their creator, thereby preserving their internal and external context. Arrangement is both a top-down and a bottom-up approach, meaning that archivists must have a broad view of the larger aspects of the organization,

⁷ Duranti, "The Archival Bond."

⁸ Theimer, "Archives in Context and as Context."

⁹ Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*.

such as specific departments, while not losing sight of how individual records were managed within the organization.¹¹ This approach creates a hierarchy of meaning and organization amongst records. Figure 1.1 demonstrates how a single collection is grouped within an archival arrangement schema.

Term	SAA Glossary Definition ¹⁰	Instantiation within the Guatemalan National Police Archive
Record Group/ Fonds	A collection of records that share the same provenance and are of a convenient size for administration.	<pre> graph TD A[Archive of the General Directorate] --> B[Archive of the General Secretary] A --> C[Archive of the General Director] B --> D[Correspondence Sent] B --> E[Correspondence Received] D --> F[Correspondence Sent, October 1984] </pre>
Sub-group/ Sous-fonds	A body of related records within a record group or collection, each corresponding to an administrative subdivision in the originating organization	
Series	A group of similar records that are arranged according to a filing system and that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity	
File (intellectual) Folder (physical)	A group of documents related by use or topic, typically housed in a folder (or a group of folders for a large file)	

Figure 1.1 The Hierarchical Structure of Archival Arrangement within the AHPN

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jennifer Meehan, “Making the Leap from Parts to Whole: Evidence and Inference in Archival Arrangement and Description,” *American Archivist* 72, no. 1 (2009): 72–90.

The hierarchical arrangement of records is reliant upon several groupings of documents: fonds, or record groups, sub-groups (sous-fonds), and series. Fonds are the highest level of archival arrangement, and are based around provenance. Fonds represent either the entirety of an organization's records, or a logical administrative grouping, such as "Archives of the General Directorate." Sous-fonds, or sub-groups, are provenance-based as well, generally representing a subset of records from an administrative division or branch of that organization. Series are structured around the recordkeeping system of an organization. The "Correspondence Received" series, for example, is organized according to month and year in accordance with the General Secretary's original filing schema. Within each series, individual records are grouped into files or folders, which provide both intellectual and physical organizations of documents according to the creator's filing structure. A 'file,' represents the intellectual grouping, or how the arrangement is documented by the archive, with the folder acting as the physical carrier of the materials. As a result, a file may be split across several folders, as one file may contain too many documents for a single folder.

After arranging the documents within a collection, archivists then translate this knowledge into finding aids or other resources that act as a guide to the collection. The finding aid acts as an entry point to the collection, providing users with an outline of a specific record grouping, so they may request material for their perusal.¹² A finding aid will typically include a brief administrative history and a listing of the arrangement of the collection. Figure 1.2 illustrates a sample finding aid from the Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police. The figure shows an excerpt from the institutional history of the General Directorate, in addition to identification of the General Directorate as a specific fond within the collection.

¹² Denise Anthony, "Beyond Description: An Exploration of Experienced Archivists' Knowledge and Searching Skills" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2006), <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/docview/305309498/abstract?accountid=7118>.

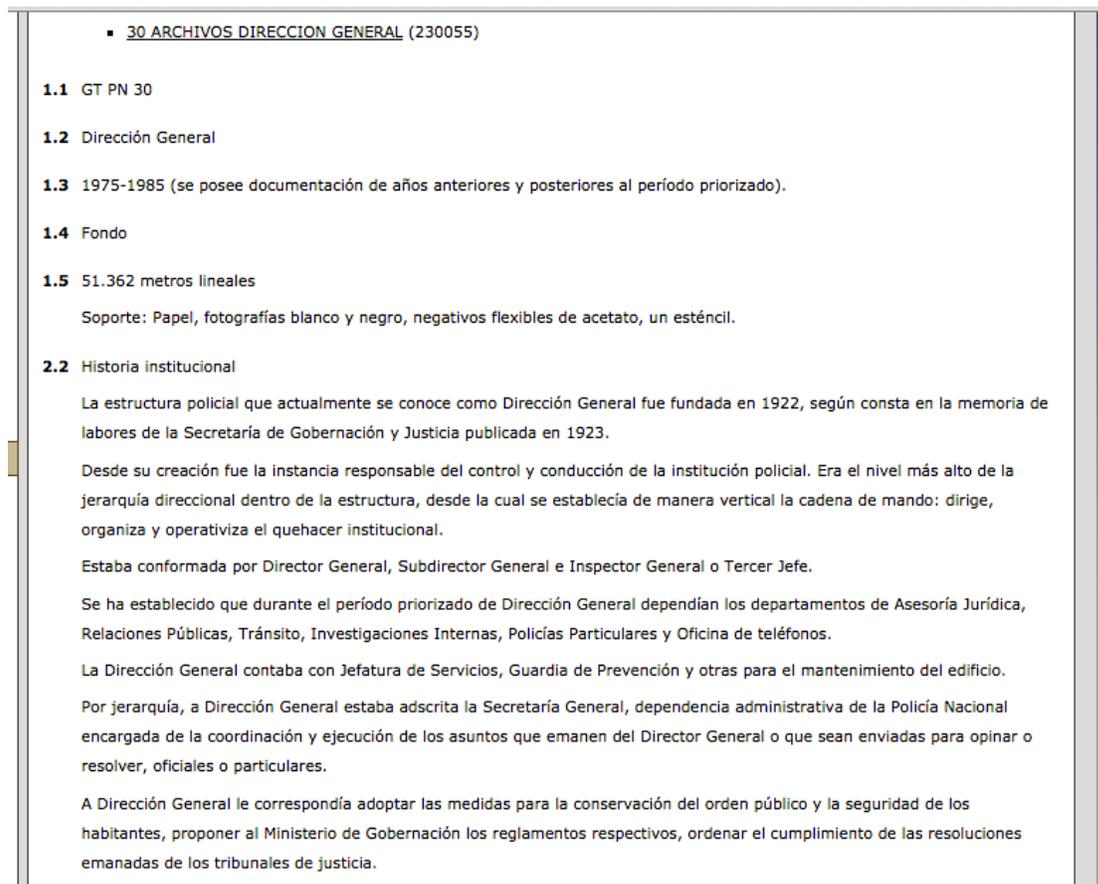


Figure 1.2 Screenshot of the Digital Archive of the AHPN, showing the finding aid for the General Directorate

NAVIGATING THE ARCHIVE: THE ROLE OF REFERENCE SERVICES

Knowledge of context informs each step of the archival process, but without proper guidance, this highly organized structure can make the archive opaque to users. The AHPN, a collection with over 60 individual fonds, 30 sub-fonds and numerous series, is an extensive archive that could pose a challenge to any potential user. This is due in part to the challenges of working within the previously described provenance-based structure of archives, as opposed to a subject-based structure (the typical organization of libraries), as the user must have in-depth knowledge of the context of the record in order to locate it. While the finding aid has acted as a method of codifying this

knowledge into a more accessible format for users,¹³ Reference Archivists are vital to serve as a bridge between the user and the collection to enable access.

The primary role of a reference archivist is that of an information mediator. Francis Blouin identifies the mediator role of the reference archivist as being a “tour guide,” to familiarize the user with the structures of the archive and explain how collections are organized. The user must be educated on the structure of organizational records in order to successfully locate primary sources.¹⁴ This interaction, Blouin notes, amounts to “translating the user’s subject based question to a provenance based system.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, until the mid-2000s, there was minimal scholarship and study conducted into the tasks of reference archivists,¹⁶ leaving a paltry history on the development of the reference archivist function. This minimal scholarship makes tracing both the work processes of reference archivists and the development of reference services as they evolve throughout history a challenging task. In addition, minimal scholarship on the tasks of reference archivists limits transparency and outside awareness of reference archivists’ functions, leaving the work of archivists and archives themselves to be surrounded by an aura of mystery. Extant forays into archival scholarship primarily come from an ethnographic viewpoint of the duties of reference archivists, in addition to identifying two different approaches to providing access to users: user-centered (subject focused) or materials-centered.¹⁷ While libraries are organized according to a subject based system of locating materials (through systems such as the Library of Congress Classification System and the Dewey Decimal System), access to archives takes place through provenance, or the hierarchical structure of collections previously described. This provenance-based system of access privileges the preservation of archival context

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Blouin, “Archivists, Mediation, and Constructs of Social Memory.”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Susan L. Malbin, “The Reference Interview in Archival Literature,” *College & Research Libraries* 58, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 69–80, doi:10.5860/crl.58.1.69.

¹⁷ Ibid.

and the maintenance of evidential value over the informational, or subject based information present within collections.

At the heart of this role as mediator is the ongoing issue of contextual information and archival collections. Essentially, context is everything related to the record or document, and can at times reside within document itself.¹⁸ As previously noted, context is the “who, what, when, where, why, in what manner, and by what means,” of a document’s origins, creation, preservation, and lifecycle,¹⁹ and is fundamental to the archivist’s goal of retaining a record’s “meaning and significance”.²⁰ It is this context that reference archivists attempt to express to users through the reference interaction. Wendy Duff’s ethnographic research into reference archivists and their work conveys clear opinions on the value of context within the reference interview. One reference archivist states, “...in some cases I have a lot of problems with people who say ‘well I want to know this’ and they don’t want to come in and look at the various angles of the event or the person.”²¹ These ‘various angles’ are preserved through archival context, a backing that archivists consider fundamental when examining primary sources.

The growth of digital collections, email reference services, and primarily online resources has created a division between user-centered approaches to reference services, and the more traditional provenance based system for access to collections.²² As users begin to develop the expectation that primary source materials will be easily accessible online, the archivist’s earlier role as mediator and guide has shifted to document delivery, providing quick resolution to a research request by locating a specific piece of

¹⁸ Christopher A. (Cal) Lee, “A Framework for Contextual Information in Digital Collections,” *Journal of Documentation* 67, no. 1 (January 18, 2011): 95–143, doi:10.1108/00220411111105470.

¹⁹ D. W. Robertson Jr., “A Note on the Classical Origin of ‘Circumstances’ in the Medieval Confessional,” *Studies in Philology* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 1946): 6–14.

²⁰ Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, “Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2002): 263–85, doi:10.1007/BF02435625.

²¹ Ciaran B. Trace, “For Love of the Game: An Ethnographic Analysis of Archival Reference Work.,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 34, no. 1 (2006): 124.

²² Richard J. Cox and The Archives Students, “Machines in the Archives: Technology and the Coming Transformation of Archival Reference,” *First Monday* 12, no. 11 (2007), doi:10.5210/fm.v12i11.2029.

information.²³ User groups are also shifting from exclusively academic researchers to genealogists and non-academic researchers.²⁴ The latter are more frequently interested in discrete pieces of information as opposed to extended research into and analysis of primary sources.²⁵ This focus on informational value, or a record's content as opposed to context, is a key issue facing archivists today: should collections shift from provenance to subject based systems to facilitate easier access?

The evolution of many libraries and archives into a digital collection environment has added the user expectation that a system will be both usable and user-centric. In short, the expectation is that the system is designed with the individual user's needs in mind.²⁶ Archivist Geoffrey Yeo has argued that in order to meet this shifting landscape of users, archivists must take a "market segmentation approach" when providing reference services.²⁷ Yeo's approach advocates for identifying the individual needs of user groups and marketing specifically to their interests, an approach that many archivists have argued sacrifices quality for efficiency. For example, archivist Terry Cook argues that Yeo's approach strips collections of their context and original order to accommodate the searching patterns of the user. He critiques Yeo's market segmentation as converting archives into "the McDonald's of Information, where everything is carefully measured to meet every customer profile and every market demographic."²⁸ Stripping a collection of

²³ Gobinda Chowdhury, "From Digital Libraries to Digital Preservation Research: The Importance of Users and Context," *Journal of Documentation* 66, no. 2 (March 9, 2010): 207–23, doi:10.1108/00220411011023625.

²⁴ Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Where Is the List with All the Names? Information-Seeking Behavior of Genealogists," *The American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 79–95.

²⁵ Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "A Virtual Expression of Need: An Analysis of E-Mail Reference Questions," *The American Archivist* 64, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 43–60.

²⁶ John Chapman, "What Would Users Do? An Empirical Analysis of User Interaction with Online Finding Aids," *MS Paper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, 2009, <https://ruby.ils.unc.edu/MSpapers/3544.pdf>.

²⁷ Geoffrey Yeo, "Understanding Users and Use: A Market Segmentation Approach," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 26, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 25–53, doi:10.1080/00039810500047425.

²⁸ Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 1, no. 31 (January 1, 1990), <http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/view/11725>.

context in order to accommodate user needs removes the evidential value of a collection—the records are no longer evidence of activities and of the lives of their creators, but instead become discrete pieces of data. This evidential value, once removed from the collection, can never be re-inserted into the archive. Cook’s assertion that moving to a market segmentation approach sacrifices quality²⁹ speaks directly to the loss of context that happens when collections are arranged to meet user needs in lieu of creator’s recordkeeping systems.

The rise of digital access continues to highlight the challenge of providing context to collections while still facilitating access.³⁰ Several archivists have conducted studies into digitally representing the hierarchical arrangement of collections that a user would encounter in a physical archive.³¹ These studies have centered upon accurately portraying archival context within a digital environment, without overwhelming or confusing an online user who may not have access to a reference archivist to guide them through the collection.³² In addition, digital archives attempt to portray what Schellenberg has described as the “three main elements” of a record: the actions to which the records relate, the organizational structure of the body that produced them, and their subject matter.³³ Bearman has done significant research into the field of digital collections and documentation³⁴ to identify the need for provenance in digital collections,³⁵ and advocated for translating these principles into digital interfaces so that context is

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Linda J Henry, “Schellenberg in Cyberspace,” *American Archivist* 61, no. 2 (1998): 309–27.

³¹ Randall Jimerson, “Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society,” *American Archivist* 52, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 332–40.

³² Margaret Hedstrom and Christopher A Lee, “Significant Properties of Digital Objects: Definitions, Applications, Implications,” vol. 200, 2002, 218–27.

³³ T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques* / (Chicago, Ill. :, c1996.), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015071452539>.

³⁴ David A. Bearman, “Documenting Documentation,” *Archivaria* 1, no. 34 (1992), <http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/viewArticle/11839>.

³⁵ David A. Bearman and Richard H. Lytle, “The Power of the Principle of Provenance,” *Archivaria* 1, no. 21 (1985), <http://journals.sfu.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/viewArticle/11231>.

maintained even when the method of access shifts.³⁶ In addition, Lee has done extensive research into the preservation of archival context in digital collections with the goal of identifying the types of context that need to be maintained in digital platforms and how to provide context for what he has defined as a “target entity,”³⁷ the central objects in digital collections.³⁸ Each of these approaches into digital archives and online access are an attempt to replicate the work of reference archivists (highlighting important concepts, acting as a guide or mediator to a collection) within the digital environment. These explorations serve to highlight both the necessity of reference archivists as mediators between the provenance-based structure of archives and users, while simultaneously looking to meet the user’s needs through an online platform.

CONCLUSION: CONTEXT AS OPPORTUNITY

Archives are not merely storage areas for documents; they preserve the stories of their creators through provenance and original order. By maintaining records within the schema developed by their creators, archivists are essentially re-instantiating the original contexts, functions, and behaviors of their record creators, allowing researchers to interrogate the systems that facilitated the record’s creation, in lieu of interpreting each document as a single piece of data. Yet, as user needs have shifted to a subject-centered view of information and archives increasingly engage with digital platforms, there has been a pull to strip archives of their original contexts to promote quick and easy access.³⁹ As a result, archival context is placed on a false binary between access and arrangement, with the hierarchical structure of the archive being considered antagonistic to the researcher’s desire to locate information.

³⁶ Terry Cook, “The Impact of David Bearman on Modern Archival Thinking: An Essay of Personal Reflection and Critique,” *Archives and Museum Informatics* 11, no. 1 (1997): 15–37.

³⁷ Christopher A. (Cal) Lee, “A Framework for Contextual Information in Digital Collections,” *Journal of Documentation* 67, no. 1 (January 18, 2011): 95–143, doi:10.1108/00220411111105470.

³⁸ Hedstrom and Lee, “Significant Properties of Digital Objects: Definitions, Applications, Implications.”

³⁹ Cook, “Viewing the World Upside Down.”

This thesis, in lieu of viewing context based collections as hindering access, demonstrates how archivists use their knowledge of archival context to successfully navigate a collection. The daily work of reference services in archives remains a poorly studied area of archival theory,⁴⁰ with few ethnographic studies focusing upon the search processes of the archivists and instead highlighting staff's perceptions of their work.⁴¹ What is truly needed to respond to user questions and concerns, however, is a process of examining the nature of archivists' own work, how they accomplish their daily tasks, and how they in turn, read the archive. Placing the work processes of the reference archivist within the larger context of the archive demystifies the work of the reference archivist while firmly establishing the value of archival context in creating meaning from the archive. In the work of the archivist, "preserving context is also about preserving the conditions that make documents more meaningful to users."⁴² Within this thesis, I highlight key elements of archival context that aid reference archivists in their search for documents, with the intention of opening up opportunities for users to employ these same methods within their own research projects.

⁴⁰ Wendy Duff and Allyson Fox, "'You're a Guide rather than an Expert': Archival Reference from an Archivist's Point of View," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 27, no. 2 (2006): 129–53.

⁴¹ Trace, "For Love of the Game: An Ethnographic Analysis of Archival Reference Work."

⁴² Theimer, "Archives in Context and as Context."

THE GUATEMALAN NATIONAL POLICE ARCHIVE

THE GUATEMALAN NATIONAL POLICE: A BRIEF HISTORY

The Guatemalan National Police were the state police force of the country from 1872 - 1996, until their dissolution as part of the country's Peace Accords. Throughout Guatemalan history, the police have served in numerous capacities, not all of which focused upon protecting and serving the citizenry of Guatemala. The National Police's functions and relationships have shifted with each changing political landscape, operating as a militarized force under the dictatorship of Jorge Úbico (1931-1944), re-integrated into a civil/non-militarized force in the 1940s, and again becoming a bureaucracy of terror during Guatemala's 36 year armed conflict (1960 - 1996).⁴³ This chapter will examine key departments of the National Police and their recordkeeping, in addition to providing a history of the Guatemalan National Police Archive, beginning with its discovery in 2005.⁴⁴

While the National Police were formally established as a peacekeeping force, with the goal of maintaining public order and protecting civilian life, they are today most remembered for their participation in human rights violations during Guatemala's armed conflict. The armed conflict was marked by periods of intense police and military brutality, with an estimated 150,000-160,000 dead and an additional 40,000-45,000 disappeared⁴⁵. The conflict itself was symptomatic of international Cold War anxiety, with Guatemala's government and military seeking to root out "communist subversives" in the country. Throughout this period, there was a close working relationship between the National Police and the Guatemalan Military, who regularly coordinated plans

⁴³ "About AHPN," *Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive (AHPN)*, accessed February 23, 2015, https://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu/about_ahpn.

⁴⁴ As there are numerous and extensive historical works focusing upon the participation of the National Police in state-sponsored repression, forced disappearances, torture, and deaths, this section is not designed to provide an overview of how the National Police operated within Guatemala during their 150 year existence

⁴⁵ Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, "The Culture of Terror and Cold War in Guatemala 1," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 2 (2006): 191-208, doi:10.1080/14623520600703081.

through the *Centro de Operaciones Conjuntas*, or Center for Joint Operations. In 1996, because of their connection to human rights violations, the National Police were disbanded and replaced with Guatemala's current police force, the *Policía Nacional Civil*, or National Civil Police. During this transitional period, 11,000 of the 19,000 members of the National Police were integrated into the new National Civil Police, with each officer participating in a three-month re-training period.⁴⁶

The National Police were centralized under the General Directorate, to which additional departments and geographic regions reported (see Figure 2.1, "Organization Chart for the National Police, 1983"). The General Director was responsible for overarching policy decisions within the police, management of personnel, issuing orders, and overseeing each administrative body within the National Police (see Figure 2.1 for a complete listing). Organized under the supervision of the General Director were numerous administrative agencies. These agencies were organized into three structures based upon the functions they performed: structures of investigation and criminal identification, structures of education, instruction, and training, and structures of corps and departmental headquarters.⁴⁷ The administrative agencies, along with the General Directorate, were located in the capital, Guatemala City, with departments outside of the capital organized according to Guatemala's internal geographic departments. Therefore, the Department of Quetzaltenango, for example, would possess its own police department and Department Head for governing and maintaining order within the borders of Quetzaltenango, and was responsible for reporting to, and receiving information from, the General Directorate.

⁴⁶ Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, "Fact Sheet: The Guatemalan National Civil Police," December 2011.

⁴⁷ Guatemala, *La Policía Nacional Y Sus Estructuras* (Guatemala, C.A: Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, 2010).

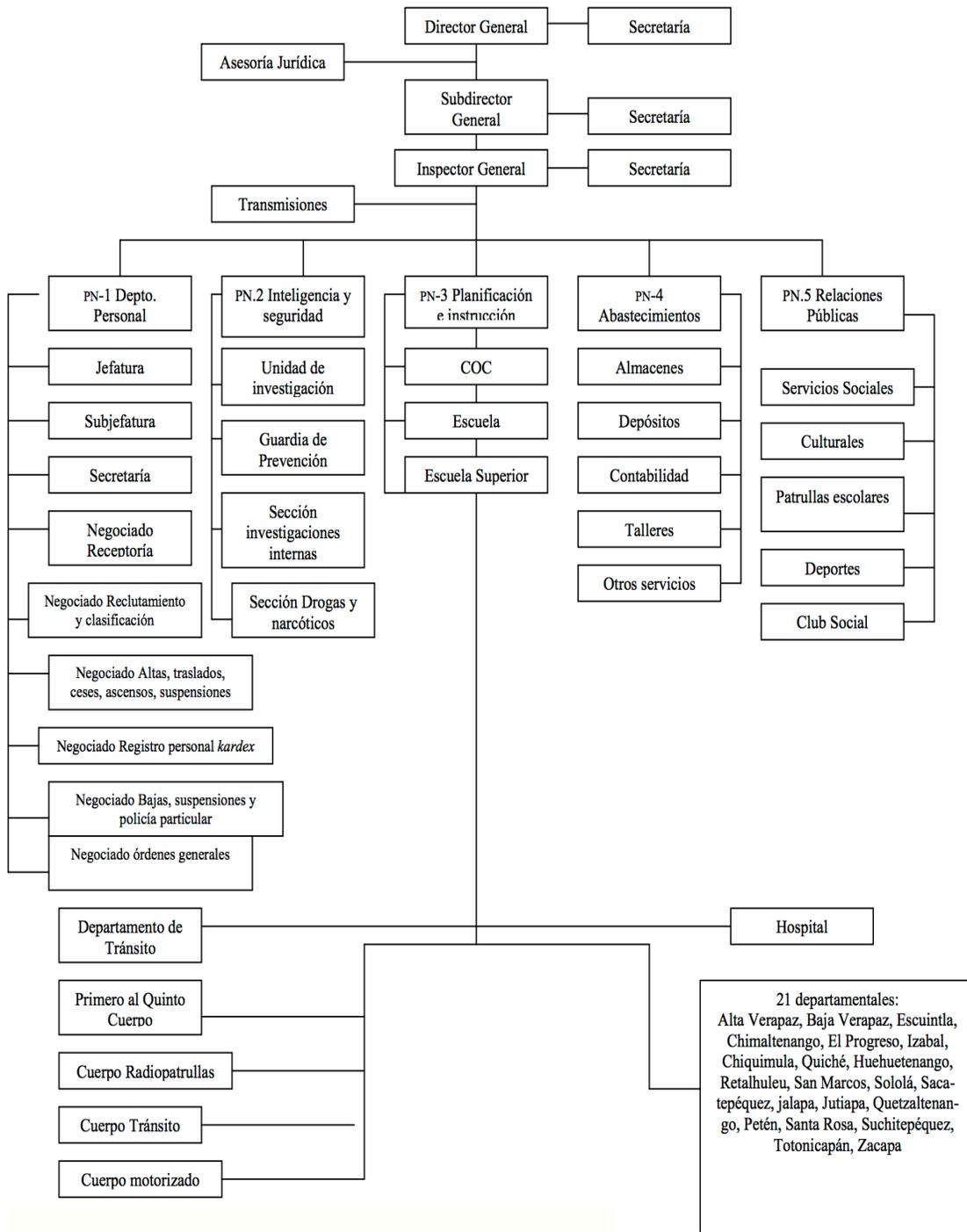


Figure 2.1 Organizational Chart for the National Police, 1983⁴⁸

Within the administrative bodies responsible for investigation and criminal identification were the *Departamento de Investigaciones Criminológicas*, or the Department of Criminological Investigations (DIC), the Secret Police, and the Detective Corps.⁴⁹ The primary functions of these departments were to follow up on reports of criminal activity, conduct special investigations, and maintain documentation surrounding complaints, intelligence gathering, and narcotics investigations. The DIC was also responsible for managing and maintaining mug-shots, fingerprint cards, and *fichas*, or index cards, alongside the Cabinet of Identification, the department responsible for obtaining mug-shots and fingerprints. The structures for education, instruction, and training were primarily comprised of the School of the National Police, the Superior School (for training of higher level officers), training grounds, and oversaw the management of new cadets. Police cadets were required to attend a three month on-the-job training before becoming officers, with the police holding additional classes for policemen in literacy, document writing, and records management.⁵⁰

The Corps and Departmental Headquarters contained geographically based police stations and sub-stations. These 22 departments oversaw the management and administration of police activities within their area as supervised by the General Directorate. Officers within geographic departments were responsible for write-ups of daily events (called *novedades*, or news), which were transmitted to the General Directorate on a regular basis. In addition to reporting on activities within their own geographic departments, departments maintained relationships with the *Centro de Operaciones Conjuntas* (the Center for Joint Operations) in the management of police-military co-operations, primarily during Guatemala's armed conflict. These joint operations were usually documented with written operation plans, although there are also additional types of correspondence, such as memos, letters, and notifications from the

⁴⁸ Organizational chart reproduced with permission from: Guatemala, *La Policía Nacional Y Sus Estructuras* (Guatemala, C.A: Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, 2010)

⁴⁹ Guatemala, *La Policía Nacional Y Sus Estructuras*.

⁵⁰ Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*, 2014.

military to the police indicating when military officers would be present in the area to conduct their own operations. These materials also indicate whether the military required police support, in the form of officers, vehicles, or simply turning a blind eye.⁵¹ These myriad structures and functions of the National Police had a direct impact on their recordkeeping structures and how they maintained and created records.

The Structures and Recordkeeping of the National Police

Of the multitudinous departments within the National Police, the General Directorate, the Department of Criminological Investigations, and the 22 geographically based departments, are of particular importance.⁵² Each of these departments have been a central focus of the archive's researching and processing activities, because they either produced documents of interest in the investigation of human rights, or were at the heart of all operations of the National Police. As a result, the following section will focus upon the structures and management of these specific departments and will not provide in-depth analysis of areas such as the School of the National Police or the Hospital.

The creation and management of records within the National Police represent what statistician Patrick Ball has termed "a functioning chain of command." In a chain of command, you would expect "documents to go down [from the Directorate] telling people what to do and documents to go up saying that it was done."⁵³ At the time of its existence, the structure of the National Police's recordkeeping functioned so that reports of information moved from the geographic departments and the zones of Guatemala City (the capital of the country is separated into zones) to the General Directorate of the National Police maintained in Guatemala City. The purpose of this flow was to have

⁵¹ Guatemala Policía Nacional Archivo Histórico, *Centro de Operaciones Conjuntas de la Policía Nacional, 1975-1985* (Guatemala, C.A.: Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, 2012), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/18697>.

⁵² Guatemala, *La Policía Nacional Y Sus Estructuras*.

⁵³ Ball, Patrick, "Technology, Access to Information, and Democracy" (Politics of Memory, Guatemala's National Police Archive, Austin, Tx, December 1, 2011), <http://www.utexas.edu/law/conferences/guatemala/schedule.php>.

constant reports of daily events, incidents, complaints, and operations routed to the Director of the Police and their Secretary. This process also happened in reverse, when the Directorate sought to disseminate information or directives to each department within the police, such as memoranda and changes to policy. Departmental secretaries used logbooks to note the receipt of paperwork from outside departments, and when memos from the General Directorate were received within different geographical departments. Logbooks for each department list specific documents received, the document number, the date of the record itself, and the date the department received the item. In an ideal world, this flow of information would have been both consistent and consistently documented: a report would have been sent to the Directorate, get logged by the secretary with the document number, document type, date it was written and date it was received, and then routed to the appropriate body within the administration.

A separate, vital documental flow within the National Police is the Department of Criminological Investigations. As the DIC was responsible for responding to citizen reports and investigating crimes, the documentation provided within DIC contains denouncements, complaints, and documentation of events such as disappearances. When a person lodged a complaint, the Department of Criminological Investigations created a *ficha*, or record card, along with a citation describing document dates, numbers, and a brief description of the document itself (e.g. “reported their car stolen”). These indexes were designed to centralize information about a given organization or individual, when the records pertaining to them were filed in different locations. In lieu of searching through all records within the department, officers could instead search for an individual’s *ficha* and note any documentation created about the individual. Fichas were either hand-written or typed on small index cards, with a space for date, document number, and a brief description of its contents (See Figure 2.2, “Example of a Ficha”). This flow of documentation, from a record’s receipt or generation to its cataloging upon a *ficha*, is perhaps the most consistent aspect of the AHPN, making *fichas* vital for an individual who is seeking information about themselves or their family members.

CUERPO DE DETECTIVES POLICIA NACIONAL ARCHIVO		Subject ———	APELLIDOS SENADORES DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS? NOMBRES DIRECCION
FECHA	NUMERO	CARPETA	ASUNTO
9/6/75.ca.	1115	Cuerpo Detectives	Protección que se les prestó en su visita oficial al país.
Document date	Document number	File where the record is kept	Description of the document

Figure 2.2 Example of a Ficha⁵⁴

In addition to the centralized institution of the National Police, each geographic department was responsible for managing notices sent to and from the General Directorate. These notices include news, memoranda, and policy changes. As a result, each geographic region within Guatemala has its own departmental fonds within the Archive of the National Police, with similar hierarchical structures, such as record groupings for Department Heads and their Secretaries. Each geographic department and administrative body was responsible for its own recordkeeping, and physical storage and maintenance of records, though at the moment there is minimal information available about the retention and destruction protocols in place for each department. Due to both the secrecy of the National Police and their desire to safeguard information, little is known about the recordkeeping and archiving protocols of the National Police until the accidental discovery of the archive in 2005.

⁵⁴ Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive, <http://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu>, GT PN, 50, S001, 754225

THE ARCHIVE OF THE NATIONAL POLICE: DISCOVERY AND PRE-ARCHIVE

In addition to disbanding the National Police force, the Peace Accords established the Historical Clarification Commission, a truth and reconciliation commission designed to examine the violence and atrocities committed during the Guatemalan Civil War. When the Commission requested the archives of the National Police in order to examine their records for possible wrongdoing, they were told that the records did not exist, or were destroyed.⁵⁵ On July 5, 2005, eight years after the Historical Clarification Commission made this request from both the military and the now-disbanded National Police, officials from the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Procurador de Derechos Humanos* [PDH]) were called to investigate a munitions bunker thought to contain improperly stored explosives. What they discovered instead was the entire archives of the Guatemalan National Police, beginning in 1881 and dated up through their dissolution.⁵⁶ The documents were in a state of advanced decay, having been left exposed to the natural elements, and infestations of vermin, and the process of recovering the documents would become the very foundations of the Guatemalan National Police Archive's current instantiation.

What followed in the wake of the archive's discovery has been a slow transition to what historian Kirsten Weld has termed "archival thinking:" viewing the archive and its arrangement, description and access as a central historical and political figure.⁵⁷ During its first year, the archive operated as a volunteer-based project designed to recover and re-organize the piles of discarded documents. Volunteers maintained a network of *confianza* (confidence, or trust), where potential volunteers were referred to the archive's Coordinator through networks of formerly active unionists, exiles, or guerrillas—individuals that have "been linked to the causes that are worth fighting for in this

⁵⁵ Kate Doyle, "The Guatemalan Police Archives: National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 170," October 4, 2011, <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/13749>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Weld, *Paper Cadavers*.

country.”⁵⁸ The project began as an activist-based attempt to recover lost historical memory, with the intention of using the records of the National Police to prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations during the armed conflict.

In this beginning phase, there was little collaboration between the volunteers and formally trained archivists, so processing was not approached through the conventions of provenance, original order or preservation of the archival context of the police’s records. Instead, documents were arranged chronologically, beginning with the period of 1975-1985. This ten-year span represents the bulk of the violence committed during the armed conflict and therefore was identified as an important date range for those processing the archive. Volunteers extracted any documents that fit this brief date range and separated them from the remaining documents, thereby stripping them of their connection to items kept within the same recordkeeping system. During this initial processing phase (now referred to by the AHPN as the ‘Pre-Archive’), collaboration with the National Security Archive in Washington DC connected the AHPN with internationally recognized archivists Trudy Huskamp Peterson, Ana Cacopardo, and Ingrid Jaschek.⁵⁹ Noting the lack of technical archival protocols in place the AHPN, Peterson, Cacopardo, and Jaschek held archival education workshops for volunteers. These workshops focused upon the preservation and maintenance of the archives’ evidential value so the documents could be considered evidence in later human rights trials.

As previously established, evidential value is fundamental to archives because it preserves the record’s existence as evidence of an activity. In order for the AHPN to serve as evidence of human rights abuses, its arrangement must be structured within current archival protocols, meaning that the arrangement of the AHPN must mirror the original recordkeeping protocols of the National Police. Developing an arrangement not based upon original order would put the AHPN at risk of having their records judged

⁵⁸ Weld, Kirsten, “Official Histories,” *Guernica / A Magazine of Art & Politics*, accessed March 22, 2015, <https://www.guernicamag.com/features/official-histories/>.

⁵⁹ Weld, *Paper Cadavers*.

inadmissible as evidence in legal trials. With the guidance of Peterson, Cacopardo, and Jaschek, the volunteers at the AHPN began researching the history of the National Police, examined documents to determine their provenance, and re-started the process of arrangement according to standards established by the International Council of Archives.⁶⁰

Throughout this initial processing phase, the archive itself was in a politically precarious situation. Upon its discovery, the archive was incorporated into the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, despite being considered "documental patrimony" by Guatemalan legislation, which would have necessitated their incorporation into the *Archivo General de Centroamérica* (AGCA), Guatemala's state archive.⁶¹ With limited resources, the PDH proceeded to secure international funding and collaboration to finance the conservation of the archive. These relationships began with Sweden's International Development Agency and Switzerland's Program for the Promotion of Peace, eventually growing to include development agencies in Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands. The AHPN has also participated in collaborative scholarly partnerships with the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Oregon, and the Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG), an organization devoted to conducting statistical research to advance human rights causes. These partnerships have been structured to generate academic interest in the archive and to promote the legal uses of the AHPN, which will be discussed in detail further on.

THE PRESENT DAY AHPN

The Physical Space of the Archive

In 2009, the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sport approved legislation that officially declared the archive to be part of Guatemala's "documental patrimony" and

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ministry of Sport and Culture, Government of Guatemala, *Decree 81-98, on the Law of Cultural Property.pdf*, Policy, (February 23, 1998).

incorporated the archive under the General Archive of Central America. With this legislation, the AHPN relocated from the Human Rights Ombudsman's Offices into a former police station in Zone 6 of Guatemala City. In addition, the AHPN now reports directly to the AGCA instead of the PDH.

Since moving in to the location in 2009, the AHPN has made drastic changes to this inherited space. The backyard that was once filled with decommissioned police vehicles has been converted into a garden to create a calm and tranquil outdoor break area in the face of the violence of the archive. Thick walls that guard the police station are painted with community murals, phrases such as "From my bones are born the flowers of undisputed freedom" written above flowers, with imagery of children playing on a hillside on nearby murals. The ever-famous "La Isla," a secret police torture chamber known only through whisper networks, as a place where people went and never came back, was located within the station, has been covered over with a new brick facade.⁶²

Archival Processing

The current processing of the archive proceeds according to the standards set forth by Peterson, Cacopardo, and Jaschek. Fonds⁶³ are processed according to the initial priorities of the archive, with materials from 1980-1985 comprising the majority of currently processed material. Within this date range, the archive began arrangement according to a 'top-down' schema, first beginning with the archives of the General Directorate, the Department of Criminological Investigations, and the departmental fonds. Once a fonds and date range are selected, archivists conduct an initial inventory of the records, documenting which materials are contained within the fonds and ensuring that the provenance and original order of the records is well understood before the physical documents are arranged. The archive has teams working to continually add to

⁶² Skylight Pictures (Firm), *Granito How to Nail a Dictator*, videorecording (Skylight Pictures, 2011).

⁶³ Fonds are the largest groupings of materials within the AHPN and are used to describe large administrative bodies, such as the "Fonds of the General Directorate."

and process materials from the General Directorate, in addition to geographic departments within the country. ⁶⁴

All processed records are arranged, rehoused, and placed into sealed boxes to await digitization. Due to the fragile nature of the records, only digital copies are available for research and access at the archive, making digitization one of the largest ongoing functions of the AHPN's archival processes. As of the end of 2014, the archive has digitized over 26 million of its 80 million documents, with teams of specialists digitizing files daily. Once files have been digitized, their boxes are resealed with a note indicating that the materials have been digitized, and placed into evidence cages, which are locked each evening.

Uses of the Archive

Outreach and Access to Information

The archive views its primary purpose as facilitating access to the information and documentation present within the archive. The archive's user community is divided into nine groups by the AHPN,⁶⁵ though the three primary user groups are state/government agencies using the documents for legal purposes, academic investigators, and what the archive has termed 'particular users,' essentially individual requests. These requests are varied: family members seeking documentation of a disappeared loved one, retired police officers seeking proof of promotion for their pensions, or individuals requesting 'their file,' documentation created about them in the process of police surveillance or reports on 'subversives.' The archive only offers copies of the digitized images within the archive

⁶⁴ During my visit in July 2014 the archivists were in the process of completing Alta Vera Paz and were slated to begin Baja Vera Paz the following month.

⁶⁵ The nine groups as listed on the Access to Information Unit's quarterly statistical reports are: The Public Ministry, Families of victims and others, social organizations, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, Administrative procedures, Ex-agents of the National Police, the National Civil Police, External investigators, and other state institutions. (See: Archivo Historico de la Policia Nacional, *Informes Cuantitativos*, October 2014, <http://archivohistoricopn.org/pages/unidad-de-acceso-a-la-informacion/informes-cuantitativos.php>.)

in lieu of access to the original paper documents, though one may request that an historian from the General Archive of Central America certify the digital images to verify that they are true and accurate copies of the physical record within the archive.

In addition to the digital-only images, the archive does not censor, redact, or withhold any information from the records. The decision not to withhold or redact any materials within the archive is both a political act and a practical decision. By opting not to protect the identities of those contained within the archive, the organization has made a quiet declaration against the culture of impunity that currently prevails in Guatemala, and avoids the potential for being overrun by requests to censor, redact, or remove documentation by users and community members. This decision means that all records within the archive are technically accessible, though they may not yet be digitized. Users may request digitization on demand services, with some reference staff working solely on what has been termed “physical searches,” where paper documents (both processed and unprocessed) that have not been digitized are searched and a photographic image taken of the relevant documents.

As part of the work of AHPN, there has been an ongoing coordinated outreach program, specifically to rural communities within Guatemala. New projects are also underway to place computers with access to the AHPN’s databases in cultural heritage institutions in rural locations. The goal of these concerted outreach efforts in rural communities is to provide access to records for those without personal internet access or the ability to travel to Guatemala City to visit the archive in person. International collaboration has also been a hallmark of the AHPN’s outreach efforts: the Digital Archive of the AHPN (produced in partnership with UT Austin) has made digital copies of all of the AHPN’s files available online, with offsite back-ups currently being housed in Switzerland. These international efforts have given the AHPN a wider platform for discussing the history of Guatemala, the needs of the archive, and their ongoing goals for outreach, access, and legal participation.

Legal Uses of the Archive

In the decade following the archive's discovery, documents from the archive have been brought forth as evidence in judicial proceedings. The most notable judicial proceeding featuring documents from the AHPN is the case of Edgar Fernando García, a young labor activist kidnapped and killed by the military and national police in a joint operation. The court case employed documents from both the National Security Archive and the AHPN to identify the date of García's disappearance, connect it to documentation of a joint military-police operation that coincided with the date of his disappearance, and provide an account of what took place on the night of García's killing. Throughout the entire court proceeding, expert testimony from the National Security Archive and archivists at the AHPN using documents from the archive was fundamental in introducing documentation of the operation that killed García. These records included maps of police operations in the area of García's disappearance and a report to the General Director confirming coordination between the military and the police in the "cleansing operation," that led to García's disappearance.^{66, 67} The successful conviction of two police officers that were connected with García's death⁶⁸ has offered a renewed hope in the capacity of the AHPN's documents to provide legal evidence in trials seeking justice for victims of Guatemala's National Police.

Another notable legal use of the AHPN's documentation has been in the genocide trial of General Efraín Ríos Montt, a former military dictator whose brief 17-month stint, as de facto President of Guatemala was marked by an increase in civilian deaths and both police and military violence. Ríos Montt was brought to trial for genocide in March of 2013, with documents of the AHPN, the recently leaked *Diario Militar*, and witness

⁶⁶ "The Story of One Document inside the AHPN," *Human Rights Data Analysis Group*, accessed May 11, 2014, <https://hrdag.org/the-story-of-one-document-inside-the-ahpn/>.

⁶⁷ López, C. Carolina, "Report on the Edgar Fernando García Trial" (National Security Archive, October 29, 2010), http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB337/C._Carolina_Lopez_Report_on_EFG_Trial.pdf.

⁶⁸ Doyle, Kate, "27 Years Later, Justice for Fernando García: National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 337," February 18, 2011, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB337/>.

testimonies serving as key points of evidence within the judicial proceedings.⁶⁹ Using statistical sampling from the Human Rights Data Analysis Group and materials from the Guatemalan National Police Archive, the prosecution argued that the violence experienced by indigenous and civilian communities increased drastically during Ríos Montt's short time in power.⁷⁰ In May 2013, Ríos Montt was convicted of genocide, with the final judgment making specific mention of the corpus of evidence provided by the AHPN and their partnership with HRDAG.⁷¹ While the conviction was overturned within ten days on a technicality,⁷² the court's acknowledgement of the AHPN's extensive work in providing documentation, and the inclusion of records from the AHPN in official evidence represented a triumph for the archivists.

The Birth of the Digital Archive

The Digital Archive of the AHPN (referred to here as the "Digital Archive,") grew from a partnership between the University of Texas at Austin and the Guatemalan National Police Archive in order to create a secure, online backup of the archive's digitized records. The AHPN, concerned that failure to maintain off-site copies or digitally accessible documents could result in a loss of data should the archive be shut down or damaged,⁷³ met with staff of the University of Texas Libraries in December

⁶⁹ Kate Doyle, "Indicted for Genocide: Guatemala's Efraín Ríos Montt: National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 419," March 19, 2013, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB419/>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Hat-Tip from Guatemala Judges on HRDAG Evidence," *Human Rights Data Analysis Group*, accessed May 11, 2014, <https://hrdag.org/hat-tip-from-guatemala-judges/>.

⁷² Guatemala's Constitutional Court ruled that on the date of 19 April 2013, Ríos Montt's lawyer was briefly thrown from the courtroom, leaving the former General without legal representation and thereby annulling all proceedings after that date. The trial has been rescheduled, though the most recently scheduled date of 5 January 2015 was postponed with no current date set. See: Will GrantBBC News and Guatemala City, "Guatemala Annuls Ríos Montt's Genocide Conviction," *BBC News*, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22605022>. "Guatemala Genocide Trial Hits Hurdles at Outset - CNN.com," *CNN*, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/06/americas/guatemala-genocide-trial/index.html>.

⁷³ In 2005, just a few short months after its discovery, there was an attack upon the archive where a Molotov cocktail was thrown through a window, damaging several documents.

2010 to collaborate on building a digital repository.⁷⁴ While the primary purpose of the digital archive is to serve as a consistent offsite backup of the documents of the AHPN, its secondary purpose is to provide ongoing and persistent digital access to documents of the AHPN for users who cannot visit the physical archive.⁷⁵ The Digital Archive is only a single facet of the partnership established between the Guatemalan National Police Archive and the University of Texas. Larger goals include the exchange of technological tools, and forging of networks and capacity building for human rights and legal/justice oriented partnerships, such as those established between the AHPN and the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice to promote ongoing investigation into human rights abuses present within the archive.⁷⁶

After signing a Memorandum of Understanding during the December 2010 meeting, the University of Texas Libraries' received a collection of hard drives from the AHPN in April 2011, containing copies of all digitized records (approximately 10 million digital images), and a copy of the Base de Fichas, a database containing scanned images and metadata for all index cards produced by the police.⁷⁷ The Digital Archive of the AHPN was formally launched on December 2, 2011 at the University of Texas at Austin at the conference "Politics of Memory: Guatemala's National Police Archive." The conference featured a series of panels discussing the academic and legal contributions of the Digital Archive to a more nuanced understanding of Guatemala's history, in addition to a live demonstration of the Digital Archive.⁷⁸ Within the first few weeks of its launch, the website received well over 10,000 visits, and since being rolled out has been used as part of history courses at the University of Texas. In addition, scholarship coordinators at

⁷⁴ Weld, *Paper Cadavers*.

⁷⁵ "About AHPN."

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kent Norsworthy, "Collaborative Digital Collection Building: The Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive," *Portal: LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections Annual Review*, no. 2012 (2012): 18–20.

⁷⁸ Kelleher, Christian et al., "The 'Unveiling' of UT's AHPN Digital Archive," December 2, 2011, <http://www.utexas.edu/law/conferences/guatemala/schedule.php>.

UT maintain a partner website dedicated to teaching and research projects that make use of the Digital Archive.⁷⁹⁸⁰

The six month period between receipt of the hard drives and the formal launching of the website were marked by numerous challenges in processing the digitized images and creating a user-friendly interface for such a massive digital collection. The primary goal in creating the Digital Archive was to “translate the [AHPN’s] standards and practices into an online environment,” meaning that the Digital Archive needed to maintain the arrangement and descriptive practices of the AHPN’s own database tools and archival processes, including representing the provenance and original order for digital images.⁸¹ Given the size of the AHPN’s digital documents, individual metadata for each item present within the collection was not a possibility, and the age and fragility of the documents makes Optical Character Recognition difficult, with the size of the collection ruling it out altogether.⁸² Converting the documents to accessible .jpg images from their original .tiff formats required the use of super-computers at the Texas Advanced Computing Center in order to convert the files to a more usable and space-saving format. With only a few months between the receipt of the hard drives and the official unveiling of the website, the successful launch and subsequent use of the archive represents an impressive achievement.

The Digital Archive replicates the structures of the physical archive, in addition to the modes of access available to researchers when visiting the AHPN. While not all

⁷⁹ “AHPN Digital Archive: Teaching & Research | Information about Projects Using the AHPN at UT Austin,” accessed March 3, 2015, <http://blogs.lib.utexas.edu/ahpn/>.

⁸⁰ Kate Doyle, “Where Archives and Human Rights Connect: Millions of Pages of Guatemalan Police Archive Released Digitally,” *UNREDACTED*, accessed February 23, 2015, <https://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/where-archives-and-human-rights-connect-millions-of-pages-of-guatemalan-police-archive-released-digitally/>.

⁸¹ Kent Norsworthy, “Collaborative Digital Collection Building: The Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive.”

⁸² Jade A. Diaz and Kent Norsworthy, “International Collaboration and Digital Archives: The Guatemalan Police Archive Project at UT Austin,” in *TCDL 2012*, 2012, https://conferences.tdl.org/tcdl/index.php/TCDL/TCDL2012/paper/view/498.*

*Optical Character Recognition requires hours of quality control, making the size of the collection impossible to both OCR and then perform necessary quality control on the resulting text.

databases and tools have been transferred over to the digital repository (for example, the Digital Archive does not replicate the databases currently in use at the archive such as the Cadena de Mandos and the Base Maestra⁸³), the Digital Archive contains the same document images that a user would encounter when doing research at the physical archive. Document images are updated annually in an exchange of information between UT Libraries and the AHPN, so the Digital Archive is not always as current as the physical archive, which is updated on a weekly basis. Due to the size of the collection, the metadata available for each individual image is limited, and users must be aware of the hierarchical structure of the archive in order to efficiently navigate the collections.

When users engage with the digital archive, they lose some of the fundamental points of mediation and guidance that take place when a user submits a request to the Access to Information Unit at the AHPN. For example, use of the digital archive does not require a reference interview, a primary source of contextual information and background for archivists responding to a request at the AHPN. However, the Digital Archive has a user guide and additional information and guidance on the web site for individuals wishing to use the archive for research.

CONCLUSION: THE ONGOING PROCESS OF ARCHIVAL THINKING

The National Police were, first and foremost, a bureaucratic organization. Documentation was used to manage nearly all aspects of the National Police's functions, from assessing promotions and demotions to conducting scorched earth campaigns alongside the military. Archivists at the AHPN have worked to preserve these bureaucratic structures and to fully document the functions and behaviors of the police and how they were manifested within their records and recordkeeping systems. This preservation of archival context has enabled the archive to participate in the prosecution

⁸³ It is not presently known why some databases were selected for transfer and others were not, although some databases, such as the Master Database, would carry privacy concerns as it logs previous information requests made at the archive.

of human rights violations, and equip staff with the knowledge needed to understand the documental history of the police.

The maintenance of archival context is fundamental to understanding the former structures of the National Police, how they operated, and how they viewed their world. By preserving the evidential value of the records, the AHPN is opening up the National Police to examination, scrutiny, and scholarship. This preservation of archival context is a fundamental aspect of the archive's mission, and is integral to understanding the National Police's operations during not only the armed conflict, but throughout history.

METHODOLOGY

THE ARCHIVE AS A RESEARCH SITE

As previously established, archives rely upon context and a provenance-based structure that may be challenging for users to navigate when attempting to locate specific information. While there have been studies identifying the content-based needs of users and studies which have examined the specialized knowledge of reference archivists, there have not yet been sufficient explorations into how archivists actually locate relevant materials in response to a user request. With the growth of digital access to primary sources, examining the searching behavior of reference archivists presents a fruitful avenue for developing tools that enable researchers working with digital materials to locate documents more successfully.

The scope and the size of the AHPN make it an important location for exploration and analysis into the behavior and decision-making processes of reference archivists, especially in relation to access to records dealing with human rights abuses. Due to the needs of the community that the AHPN serves, reference requests tend to be similar, such as individuals seeking the name of a missing loved one or their own file; or an agency such as the Public Ministry or Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, conducting research into human rights violations for an upcoming legal case. Therefore, time spent observing the Reference Staff within the AHPN allowed for multiple opportunities to study the reference process.

In addition to the complexities present in the physical archive, the need for research and analysis into the expert knowledge of Reference Archivists at the AHPN is further warranted by the presence of the Digital Archive of the AHPN. Since the unveiling of the website, University of Texas at Austin has worked to incorporate use of the digital and physical archive into academic scholarship surrounding Central American history and human rights issues. Personal communications with students and researchers at the AHPN confirm that the digital archive is difficult to navigate, primarily because

researchers do not always know where or how to begin their searches. Lack of contextual knowledge and awareness of the structure and function of the National Police can make it challenging for users to explore the archive without guidance. Reference Staff at the archive, however, spend nearly eight hours each day locating relevant documentation and have obtained the requisite knowledge to navigate the archive successfully.

With these issues in mind, I structured my fieldwork at the AHPN to answer the following research questions:

- How does the AHPN respond to an information request, from the initial reference interview to the final response to the request?
- How do Reference Staff conduct specific searches, beginning with the initial examination of the request to searching across different fonds and series within the archive?
- What knowledge base do Reference Staff draw upon when deciding how to begin a search within the archive, select fonds that are relevant to the search, and then finally decide which documents should be presented to the user?
- How might these search behaviors and strategies used by the Reference Staff be translated to the Digital Archive of the AHPN to allow researchers the same facility when searching through the digital platform as they do when visiting the physical archive?

I structured these research questions with the goal of understanding the search processes that take place at the AHPN, and in order to examine how these tactics might be replicated for users of the Digital Archive. This translation work could occur through the creation of tutorials designed to provide the user with archival literacy⁸⁴, or through documentation that the user can browse in order to better understand the digital archive's structure. Research questions were purposefully left broad, as scholars and users of the

⁸⁴ This thesis employs the term “archival literacy” to mean aspects of knowledge and information about the structure, purposes of, and uses of archives in order to aid a user in successfully locating, analyzing, and conducting research with primary sources.

archive know very little about the AHPN's process for providing access to information, aside from reports of individuals who had done research within the AHPN and documentation provided by the AHPN on their website.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Given the open-ended nature of my research questions, I decided upon a qualitative, ethnographic approach that was firmly centered upon participant observation, participant use of the Think-Aloud method, and a grounded theory approach to data interpretation.⁸⁵ Qualitative and ethnographic research approaches provide researchers with the capacity to examine trends that are not easily measured through quantitative or statistical data, such as thoughts, feelings, and work processes. Traditional ethnographic field research is designed with the idea that a researcher should act as a “fly on the wall,” though these more hands-off approaches have given way towards an “indigenous” approach to collecting data. The overarching idea of a more immersive, or indigenous, form of ethnography being that the more the researcher is allowed to participate in the lived experiences of the population being studied, the closer they will be to understanding the contexts that produce certain behaviors, ideas and viewpoints.⁸⁶

Archival ethnography, fieldwork designed to approach and understand contemporary practical issues in archival practice, is a relatively new but growing facet of archival scholarship.⁸⁷ Archivists have long relied upon case studies that follow a conventional structure of detailing actions taken and problems encountered within the implementation of specific practices. Ethnographic field work is beginning to enhance the realm of case-study scholarship, as it aids in the identification of socio-cultural

⁸⁵ The Think-Aloud Method is a form of observation where participants perform a task and narrate their thought processes and reasoning behind each step of the task. This method allowed me to hear each archivist articulate their approach to a specific search and record verbally each step in the search process.

⁸⁶ Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition*, Second Edition edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁸⁷ Karen F. Gracy, “Documenting Communities of Practice: Making the Case for Archival Ethnography*,” *Archival Science* 4, no. 3–4 (December 2004): 335–65, doi:10.1007/s10502-005-2599-3.

constructs that may affect or change decision making and practical processes within a specific repository, while also permitting a closer focus upon the micro-processes and ideas that govern the functions of a specific environment.⁸⁸

In addition to taking traditional field notes and observation sessions, I encouraged participants to employ the Think-Aloud method during observation sessions. The Think-Aloud Method involves the verbal articulation of decisions and thought processes by participants as they complete a task. Usage of the Think-Aloud Method tends to produce accurate and realistic representations of individuals' tacit knowledge, and offer successful transmission of information that guides activities.⁸⁹ As opposed to engaging in loosely structured interviews, where participants are removed from the environment to engage in a discussion, the Think-Aloud method permits for observations in situ, where they can continually focus upon their work while expressing their thought processes and logical reasoning behind the completion of specific work duties.

To interpret my ethnographic data I approached my field notes, transcriptions, and data through the lens of 'classical' grounded theory as established by Glaser and Strauss,⁹⁰ where themes are allowed to emerge organically from the data based upon open coding for central or recurring themes, ideas, and impressions expressed by participants.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ethnographic approaches to studying archives have begun to grow within the past decade. For some examples, see:

Elizabeth Yakel, "The Social Construction of Accountability: Radiologists and Their Record-Keeping Practices," *The Information Society* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 233–45, doi:10.1080/019722401753330832.

Kalpna Shankar, "Scientists, Records, and the Practical Politics of Infrastructure" (Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304799242/abstract?accountid=7118>.

Karen F. Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2007).

Duff and Fox, "'You're a Guide rather than an Expert': Archival Reference from an Archivist's Point of View."

⁸⁹ Marsha E Fonteyn, Benjamin Kuipers, and Susan J Grobe, "A Description of Think Aloud Method and Protocol Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 3, no. 4 (1993): 430–41.

⁹⁰ Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Transaction, 1999).

⁹¹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, 1990).

Grounded theory is an ideal approach when a researcher is examining “uncharted waters,” the argument being, “where no theory regarding a situation exists, it is impossible to test theory.”⁹² As Glaser and Strauss eventually diverged in their approaches to data analysis, I opted for data analysis as established by Corbin and Strauss.⁹³ Corbin and Strauss’ grounded theory approach to data analysis consists of a process of open coding, where the text is ‘opened up’ by the researcher through close examination, followed by the clustering or categorization of data into theoretical groupings.⁹⁴ These stages of data analysis allow for flexibility in theory development and permit the researcher opportunities to examine several concepts or realms of theory development within ethnographic data.⁹⁵

DATA COLLECTION

Field Work and Observation

I conducted field research at the Guatemalan National Police Archive for four weeks in July, spending each day observing staff members in the *Unidad de Acceso a la Información*, or the Access to Information Unit. During my fieldwork, I observed Reference Staff⁹⁶ in the completion of their daily tasks, with additional work spent participating in and observing the paper processing of the AHPN in order to fully understand how the archive has internalized and employed traditional archival principles in their daily practice. Since most Reference Staff began their work in the archive either

⁹² Phyllis Noerager Stern, “Grounded Theory Methodology: Its Uses and Processes,” *Image* 12, no. 1 (1980): 20–23, doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.1980.tb01455.x.

⁹³ Helen Heath and Sarah Cowley, “Developing a Grounded Theory Approach: A Comparison of Glaser and Strauss,” *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 41, no. 2 (February 2004): 141–50, doi:10.1016/S0020-7489(03)00113-5.

⁹⁴ Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm Strauss, “Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria,” *Qualitative Sociology* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 1990): 3–21, doi:10.1007/BF00988593.

⁹⁵ Heath and Cowley, “Developing a Grounded Theory Approach.”

⁹⁶ As staff members within this unit did not have a specific job title, I employ the terms ‘Reference Staff,’ ‘Interviewing Archivist,’ or ‘Researching Archivist’ to describe these individuals and to more closely connect their work to specific work duties and roles within the organization.

as digitization or processing staff, spending a few days understanding these work procedures gave me additional awareness of the knowledge base and experiences of Reference Staff.

Before beginning the process of data collection and observation during my field work period, I submitted an application for Human Subject Research through the University of Texas at Austin's Internal Review Board to ensure that my methodology, research questions, and approaches to working with human subjects in the course of my ethnographic research complied with ethical standards at the university. As part of this process, I determined that all data collection and interviews with participants would be anonymous, meaning I would obtain verbal instead of signed consent forms, not record or document the names of any individuals I made contact with or interviewed during the process of the study, and would not generate any documentation that named participants within the study. In May of 2014, after submitting an overview of my research methodology and an application for approval, the Internal Review Board determined that my study was Exempt. An exempt determination means that my work did not require approval of a voting member of the Internal Review Board, and because the nature of my research questions focused upon work processes and not personal impressions, sentiments about their work environment, or request any personal data from participants, I was cleared to conduct my study.⁹⁷

I initially obtained entry to my field site (AHPN) through contacts at the University of Texas at Austin. As the University of Texas at Austin has collaborated with the AHPN to create the digital archive, and the archive has previously hosted groups of student researchers conducting investigations, this pre-existing relationship assisted me in my initial contact phase. I was introduced to the AHPN's Coordinator during a conference in February of 2014, where I spoke with him of my interest in visiting the archive to study the Access to Information Unit. We corresponded briefly via email, at

⁹⁷ "Policies and Procedures Section 5 - The Office of Research Support at the University of Texas at Austin.html," n.d.

which point I was introduced to the Head of the Access to Information Unit to plan my itinerary and schedule activities for my fieldwork.

My recruitment of participants began through email contact with the Head of the Access to Information Unit at the AHPN. After describing the focus of my research and providing the Head of the Access to Information Unit with consent forms and my IRB approval letter, we decided that my research should focus upon six specific staff members: the Head of the Unit, who provided guidance and information on the functioning of the Access to Information Unit, and five Reference Staff who are responsible for locating and compiling documents that are relevant to each individual research request. To respect the privacy of the employees of the AHPN, I did not record names or identifying information during the observation process. In order to maintain this anonymity, I assigned each interview a number based upon the date and order in which the interview or observation session occurred, with no numbers or data available to link participants to a specific interview, numeric code, or date. I designed these procedures for anonymized data in order to ensure that I conducted my research ethically and with awareness of the privacy needs of the employees at the AHPN.

My daily activities were guided by a pre-established schedule decided upon by myself and the head of the Access to Information Unit at the AHPN. My research began with a two-day introduction to the history and development of the archive, its current policies and procedures, and an examination of the administrative functions of the Access to Information Unit as overseen and guided by the Head of the Unit. After this introduction, I spent five days shadowing different members of the Access to Information Unit as they went about their daily duties of searching for digital and physical documents within the archive. I spent the majority of my time observing three staff members in the course of their daily activities, usually centered upon a single information request each day, with periodic pauses to either finish a pending request or to search physically through the documents. On average, I spent approximately two workdays with each individual, including the head of Reference Services, for a total of 16 hours observing

and working with each participant. In addition to observing Reference Staff, I spent two days meeting with the Head Archivist at the AHPN; observed training on document identification, determining provenance and diplomatics (identifying where a document comes from and to which fonds/series it pertains); and participated in one day of paper processing at the AHPN. At the conclusion of these activities, I returned to my observations of Reference Staff before spending one final day conducting my own search in the Reading Room at the archive and comparing notes with the Reference Staff member who was responding to the request upon which my search was based.

Recordings and Field Notes

In order to capture the narrative details participants were providing during observation sessions, I obtained verbal consent and audio recorded each participant. Throughout these recorded sessions, the archivists conducted their daily work, primarily at a computer workstation, while I observed, took brief notes, and asked questions during the process to clarify what was taking place on their computer screen, their rationale behind specific decisions, and what they were examining in individual documents to determine relevance. The reference staff in turn employed the Think-Aloud method, and narrated their search process during each session. This method oriented me to their work habits and their own particular, personalized approach to locating information within the archive.

I generated field notes both contemporaneously during observation sessions and at the conclusion of each workday. During daily observation sessions, I took field notes to highlight emerging themes within an individual search process, such as an important discovery of new information, the moment when a researching archivist decides to conclude a search, or when they shared an anecdote that appeared to have great value in their own development as archivists. At the conclusion of each workday, I wrote an additional narrative about the occurrences of the day to add structure and content to my field notes, and engaged in a brief open-coding session.

My understanding of the reference process was ongoing as information surfaced from these observation periods and as codes developed from my field notes. Given the emergent nature of my understanding, I concluded each coding session by writing a series of questions, doubts, and personal impressions. I used these questions or doubts to guide the following day's observation sessions: for example, if I could not understand why an archivist included a specific document, or why they consulted a particular fonds or series, I would take time to ask them for clarification the following day. As much of my daily work sessions were comprised of a dialogue between myself and the researching archivist I was observing, use of the constant comparative method allowed me freedom to explore salient points and identify questions within the moment, and gave me the opportunity to return to questions the following day to either clarify or re-assess an action.⁹⁸

DATA ANALYSIS

Coding Transcripts and Interviews

A period of more focused coding took place after I had left the field. My approach to analyzing the data collected during my field work was again focused upon the grounded theory method of analyzing qualitative data, in addition to implementing both open coding and the constant comparative method when coding and examining transcripts, field notes, and audio recordings. Upon returning from my field work, I transcribed the audio recorded during my observation periods, compared the audio transcripts to my field notes, and attached time stamps to sections of audio that were particularly vital in answering my predefined research questions. Using the qualitative analysis software NVivo, I coded the audio transcripts for specific decision making processes and moments that I considered pivotal in answering my research questions. My first examinations of transcripts and field notes involved highlighting key themes and commonalities within searches, such as the use of secondary sources, consistent

⁹⁸ Corbin and Strauss, "Grounded Theory Research."

researching within specific databases, or common patterns of reasoning behind specific decisions. These codes focused upon three key areas: Search, Policy, and Anecdote, with several sub-themes stemming from each of these three areas. During open coding sessions, I sought out word and thought patterns that appeared multiple times across observation sessions. I also coded for repeated actions and moments I defined as “contextual shifts:” a key moment in the searching process where the scope of a search shifted based upon new information, such as a misspelled name or a pseudonym, that offered the researching archivist moments of insight or new points of entry into the archive.

I structured the ‘search’ category to trace each individual search process I observed and to facilitate the creation of diagrams and visual representations of the archivists’ search processes as a way to portray the daily practices of the Access to Information Unit. ‘Policy’ groupings highlight defined practices at work within the AHPN, such as specific methods for determining the provenance of a record, the process of arranging and describing records, digitization priorities, and any administrative choices that govern how the archive conducts its daily work. I designed the ‘anecdote’ grouping to pinpoint commonalities in the stories archivists tell about their jobs, such as a specific search request that is regularly talked about among reference archivists, or phrases that appear in each archivist’s discussion of their searching. I used my coded transcripts and interviews to guide both the visual representation of the data and its interpretation through grounded theory.

I charted individual searches from the initial search phase to the point when each search was routed back to the Head of the Unit to respond to the user’s request. These charts began as tables documenting when specific fonds and series were examined, why, and in what order, in addition to noting the reasons for selection of each fonds and series. While these tables are specific to the context of an individual search, they allowed for quick visualization of patterns that were emerging from the search process, and facilitated

the identification of key moments of decision-making that facilitated the creation of the workflow diagrams in the following chapter.

Developing Diagrams: Finding Moments of Contextual Breakthrough

Through analysis and coding of my data, it became evident that the strongest emergent theme for “how do archivists at the AHPN respond to an information request?” was “It depends.” This does not mean that there is no concrete answer available from the data. Each search process is so deeply mired within the individual specifics of the request that developing a clear, one size fits all system for locating relevant documents would sanitize the searches themselves, and strip them of the context that made the searching process meaningful. To highlight the individuality of these searches, I explored two specific search scenarios encountered during my fieldwork in-depth, including creating flowcharts to document how contextual information influences the search process. These diagrams, when combined with an overview of the searching process that has become evident through analyzing each information request and response at the AHPN during my observation periods, demonstrate how the activities of the search stay consistent, although the specifics of the search will change how these activities manifest. For example, every search observed at the AHPN begins with the use of secondary sources to determine any names, dates, or geographic locations that apply to the request, but which names, dates, and locations are found impact which fonds the archivist chooses to search first.

In order to create clear visual representations of the search process, I designed a series of diagrams that described the flow of a reference request, in addition to smaller, more detailed diagrams for two different search scenarios encountered during my field work. I did not structure or design my research to create vast generalities about reference and access within the archival profession, nor within human rights archives specifically. As a result, my analysis of the data does not speak to larger trends in archives, but instead to the micro-processes that comprise the daily work experiences of the reference

archivists at the AHPN. These diagrams are a starting point for identifying spaces of tacit knowledge production within the AHPN, and to highlight areas where awareness of archival context may help engage users in the Digital Archive and give individuals better tools to search through the collection.

OVERVIEW OF REFERENCE ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AS A POINT OF ENTRY

The search processes analyzed within this chapter are designed to highlight the breadth of decisions and knowledge of archival context required for each foray into the archive, in addition to elucidating the work conducted by reference staff when searching through the archive. This examination of reference work clarifies that archival context and the provenance-based organization of the AHPN does not limit the accessibility of the collection, as archivists possess clear avenues for engaging with the archive. What takes place within a search for information is multi-layered. In looking for records, archivists draw upon archival context: including their knowledge of the organizational structure, geographical departments, and recordkeeping behaviors of the National Police. Additionally, archivists draw upon secondary sources to flesh out information about the place, person, or event detailed in an information request. While these processes for locating records are common throughout archival reference services,⁹⁹ at the AHPN they pose a unique challenge due to both the size of the archive and the complexity of 150 years of organizational changes within the National Police. In spite of the variety of forms each search may take, a central theme that has emerged is reference archivist's capacity to develop channels, or pathways into the archive, based upon their understanding of archival context and its instantiation within the AHPN. Through the use of databases, and specific technological tools, archivists at the AHPN have created resources based upon these routes that allow them to effectively navigate the AHPN.

By focusing upon moments where a specific piece of information has shaped the search process, it is possible to see how each search is dependent not only upon the information present within the request, but how a single piece of data, such as a date or location, can be translated to the records of the AHPN through an awareness of archival context. It is their own awareness and understanding of archival context that allows

⁹⁹ Anthony, "Beyond Description."

reference archivists to drill down into the fonds, sub-fonds, and series where a document may be located.

Each document is a small piece of information in a broader narrative within the archive, a byproduct of the activities engaged in by the Police. The research team's knowledge of this documental flow, and how each piece of the archive fits into the larger administrative narrative of the police, demonstrates how extensive archivists' awareness of archival context is. This chapter provides an overview of the process for responding to an information request or solicitation at the Guatemalan National Police Archive. First, the technological tools of the AHPN are identified and described to provide a brief orientation to the reference services of the archive. This chapter then segues into a detailed explanation of the search process, and follows with two search scenarios that highlight how the research archivist translates a user's request into archival context, allowing them to locate information within the AHPN. These scenarios will focus upon two different information requests, the first being from a user who is seeking "their file", and the second from an academic user, to demonstrate the individualized nature of the searching process and to pinpoint how Reference Archivists use their knowledge of archival context to successfully navigate the AHPN.

FROM REQUEST TO RESPONSE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE REFERENCE PROCESS

The Technological Tools of the Archive

Reference Archivists' searches are localized to the databases and technological tools of the archive. The databases of the AHPN contain digitized copies of nearly 30 million documents and the AHPN's Information Technology Department updates the databases on a weekly basis.¹⁰⁰ While there are individuals who search the physical archive for paper documents, these searches are infrequent and only occur if the archivist is aware of the explicit document types they are seeking and has already searched the

¹⁰⁰ Interview, 140708, 08 July 2014

digital archive.¹⁰¹ Document images are accessed through the TotalImage database, the digital repository for all documents. The structure of the TotalImage database mirrors the structure of the physical archive, with documents grouped into fondos, sub-fonds, and series, with each item given a unique identifier. When responding to a request for information, archivists cite the document's unique identifier according to the TotalImage database.

In addition to the TotalImage database, there are four databases in use at the archive: the *Base Maestra de Fichas* (Master Records database), the *Base de Cadena de Mandos* (Chain of Command database), the *Base Maestra* (Master database) and the *Base de Libros* (Books Database).¹⁰² The AHPN has created these databases to provide some text search capabilities to records that are regularly searched for, such as record cards and listings of promotions. Databases provide additional intellectual control over the materials within the archive, as they provide alternate means for locating documents outside of the regular hierarchical structure of the archive. This means that a researching archivist, instead of perusing the entire fonds of fichas within the Department of Criminological Investigations to find a single name, or examining all lists of promotions and demotions, can use a text search to locate the documentation they need. Once a relevant item such as a name or record card is found, the researching archivist notes the location of the document within the hierarchy of the archive (fondos, sous-fonds, series) and examines the digitized document in the TotalImage database. Additionally, researching archivists use the fondos and series where the document resides as a potential location to continue their search.

The Base Maestra de Fichas, the most commonly used database, is a cataloged system containing all fichas, or record cards, from the Department of Criminological Investigations. Fichas contain the name, and possibly date of birth and familial

¹⁰¹ Field Notes, 23 July 2014

¹⁰² Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, "Acompañamiento Kathryn Darnall" [Memorandum] 26 June 2014

information for any individuals who were surveilled, had contact with the National Police, submitted a complaint, were the subject of a complaint, committed a crime, or were for any other reasons designated a person of interest by the National Police. Fichas may also contain information for a group of individuals, such as “United States Senators,”¹⁰³ or a subject, such as “State Coup,”¹⁰⁴ which the Department of Criminological Investigations used to connect all relevant information about a person or topic into one location. The fichas represent a primary entry point into the archive because they link separate documents together and are generally the most useful way to locate an individual within the archive. The database of fichas permits archivists to search by a variety of names, including first name, second first name, last name, second last name, middle names, family members’ names, and notes/subjects (e.g. “Guerrillas”).

GUARDIA JUDICIAL		APellidos ARBENZ GUZMAN.-	
ARCHIVO		NOMBRE Coronel Jacobo	
capz.-			
FECHA	NUMERO	CARPETA	ASUNTO
26.10.50.-	1406.-	D.G/Gdia. Civil.-	Referente a una platica de que tenia que morir.-
11.2.51.-	446.-	Gdia. Judicial.-	Referente a la denuncia de un atentado
1er SEM. 1951.-			
2.12.51.-	253.-	D.G.Gdia. Civil.-	Referente a un atentado.-
17/4/51.	36.	Presidencia.	ref. a un anónimo.
5/5/54.	87	Presidencia.	Denuncias de noticas contra el Gobierno dadas por la radio clandestina.
13/6/54.	1423.	Guardia Judicial.	Anónimo. Denuncia de un golpe de estado.
19/6/54.	386.	Direc. Generales.	Manifiesto de Castillo Armas contra el Gobierno de Guatemala.

Figure 4.1 Ficha for Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán¹

¹⁰³ Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive, <http://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu>, GT PN, 50, S001, Document 754225

¹⁰⁴ Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive, <http://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu>, GT PN, 50, S001, Document 1553421

The database returns all results that match the users' search, so a search for the first name "Jacobo" will return the ficha for Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, but will also return any other individuals with the first name Jacobo. As demonstrated in Figure 4.1, the fichas act as an index to locate additional documentation, providing a listing of documents that can be searched out through the archive. The fifth document, a "Denuncia" with document number 87, can then be located in Fonds 50 (Department of Criminological Investigations), Series 50 (Denuncias) by searching through the series to locate Denuncia number 87. This process of examining a ficha and locating records within subsequent series form a significant part of the searching process, as will be examined in the following section.

The Base de Cadena de Mandos, or Chain of Command database, is a log of all promotions, demotions, or lateral personnel movements within the National Police for any given date. The National Police maintained records of all promotions and demotions through a series of logbooks, which have been digitized, with each page logged individually into the database. The result is a database that can provide a listing of officers for a specific geographic location for any given point in time during the National Police's instantiation, along with a digital image of the page listing the promotion/demotion so the user can verify the information. Researching archivists primarily use the Cadena de Mandos to provide information to government organizations that are in the process of conducting research for future criminal trials or pending investigations. The Cadena de Mandos will list the Primer Jefe, Segundo Jefe, Tercer Jefe, Jefes de Sección, and Jefes de Subestación,¹⁰⁵ in addition to persons of interest/head officers for specific departments of the National Police or posts that the archive considers of particular interest¹⁰⁶. The primary usage of the Chain of Command database is to provide valuable information about high-ranking officials within the National Police and to connect these officials to specific operations that took place within a date range.

¹⁰⁵ First Officer, Second Officer, Third Officer, Department Head, Substation Head – Internal guidelines for data entry into the Cadena de Mandos lists over 25 posts of interest for ingestion into the database

The Base Maestra, or Master database, is a log of all searches that have been conducted by AHPN staff, and is used as a method to track specific research requests, browse documents that may prove useful to another search, and to provide researchers and users with background information so that they need not repeat searches unnecessarily. Each request in the Base Maestra contains a unique identifier assigned to a request for information, a description of the request, and a listing of each document (unique identifier and page number containing the relevant information), along with a reason for selection and a secondary, topic-based assignment for each document (for example, “Documents related to women and children”). In addition to tracking individual requests, the Master database serves as a technological instantiation of the expert knowledge of the researching archivists. As users may submit the same request several times with the hope of receiving additional information, the Master database allows archivists to examine who most recently responded to a request, the documents located, and which fonds or series have previously been searched or may provide new information.

The databases of the AHPN offer archivists an opportunity to sift through commonly used documents with simple metadata fields, allowing them to locate documents that will guide their searches. A ficha, for example, is a commonly used document, but fichas were created by several departments: The Cabinet of Identification, the Department of Technical Investigations, and the Department of Criminological Investigations. Rather than search each fonds for a specific name, the database aggregates fichas from these individual fonds that archivists can then employ to guide further searches. Acting much like a card catalog, the fichas are indexes to locate additional documents, which the archivist will use when selecting series or sub-fonds they wish to explore. Similarly, the Chain of Command database contains notes of all promotions and demotions within the general administrative structures of the police and the geographic departments, placing all information into one location so the archivist can more easily call upon this information. The Master database, which documents all

searches, provides archivists with a jumping-off point for similar research requests: if an individual or topic has already been explored, they can decide which series may have new documentation added, which series have been searched fruitlessly, and the types of documentation they can expect to locate.

Years of working within the archive has given archivists experience in navigating the structure of the AHPN and allowed them to pinpoint specific pathways into the archive that will be used repeatedly. Searches for names will always begin with fichas, an event will always have a commanding officer, and searches will invariably overlap with previous searches. Databases have simplified these well-used routes into the archive by offering a simplified method for repeating patterns during a search: locating names, posts, or previous work. By synthesizing disparate information from across the archive into these databases, archivists are creating new and additional instantiations of their knowledge of archival context. While the databases do not maintain the hierarchical structure of the collection, they do maintain the archival context of the materials by noting the fonds, sub-fonds, and series for each document. As a result, these databases are able to preserve the evidential value of the materials in use at the archive while simultaneously providing a small trail of potential leads into the archive's extensive documentation. These potential leads into the archive are a fundamental aspect of the searching process, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

From Request to Response

The Access to Information Unit is responsible for orienting users to the reading room and responding to information requests. Information requests may be submitted by government agencies, academic users, or individuals seeking a discrete piece of information or a specific file, and can be submitted via email or in person. However, it is far more common for users to submit an information request in lieu of using the reading room unless they are an academic researcher. At present, the Unit averages four business days between receipt of the initial request and a final response to the search, which could

be either a positive response or a negative response (items found, or no items found). This four-day turn-around is designed to keep the Unit in line with Guatemala's Freedom of Information Law, which allows ten business days to respond to an information request¹⁰⁷, but is also in line with timelines the Unit has established, four days being considered a sufficient amount of time before one has exhausted all search possibilities or methods for approaching a specific request.¹⁰⁸ The archive tends to operate on a first-come, first-serve basis when responding to information requests, though the archive may give priority to individuals who are making a same-day trip into the archive, such as an individual who lives far away from Guatemala City and has made a special trip to the archive solely to submit their request.¹⁰⁹

Each request begins with a Solicitud, or Solicitation form (see Figure 4.2, "User Makes Request"), designed to offer those in the Search Team as much specific background information as possible about the request. Background information in this case could be any detail about the person, place, or event that would allow the researching archivist to narrow down searching possibilities. For example, archivists know that a specific name or pseudonym will be more easily located in the Base de Fichas, while a clear date range for an event would narrow down the amount of time spent searching for individual documents within series and fonds, and a geographic location would allow the researching archivist to start in specific departmental fonds.

¹⁰⁷ Secretaría de Control y Transparencia, *Ley de Acceso a La Información Pública Comentada: Decreto No. 57-2008.pdf* (Gobierno de Guatemala, 2011), https://vicepresidencia.gob.gt/vice/?Vc=_28.

¹⁰⁸ The number of requests actively being researched/responded to ranges from six to ten, with each archivist working on one to three requests at any given time. Between January and October of 2014, the Access to Information Unit had responded to 1,025 requests

¹⁰⁹ Interview, 140708, 08 July 2014

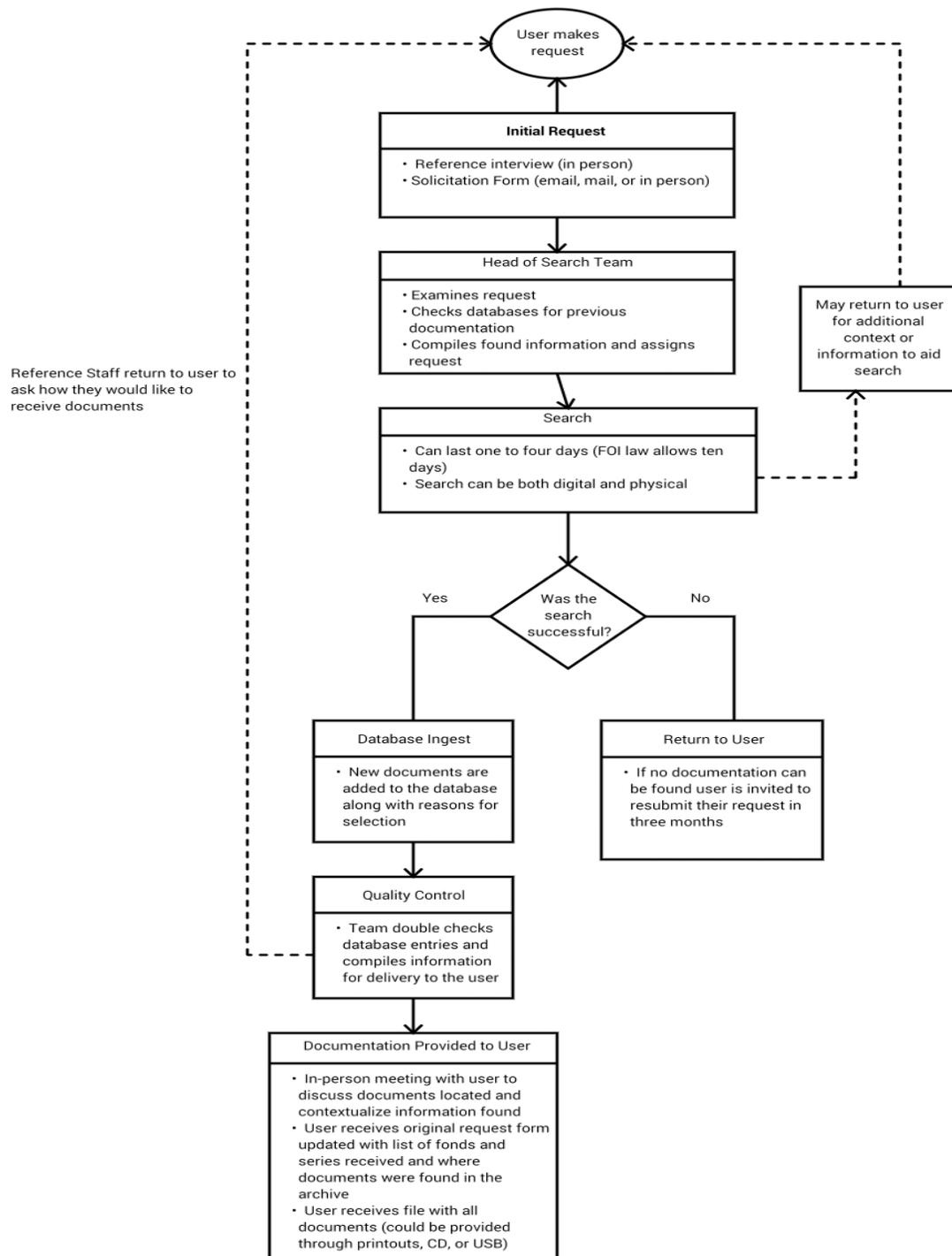


Figure 4.2 An Overview of the Reference Process in the Access to Information Unit

Solicitud No.: AD

Fecha de solicitud:

Fecha de entrega:

Fecha de prórroga:

Datos Generales del Solicitante

Nombre:

Edad: Dirección:

Documento de Identificación:

Teléfono(s):

Correo electrónico de contacto:

Datos del Requerimiento

Fecha de lo solicitado:
Día Mes Año

Nombre de la persona que gestionó el trámite:

Asunto a investigar:

Denuncia Cancelación de Antecedentes Otros:

Dirección donde ocurrió el hecho:

Fecha del hecho:
Día Mes Año

Fecha de gestión del trámite:
Día Mes Año

Estructura (s) policiaca (s) involucrada (s) o juzgado

Perteneció a la PN: SI NO

Cargo: Grado:

Nombramientos: Altas Bajas

Figure 4.3 Images of an Information Solicitation (courtesy of archivohistoricopn.org)

This form (see Figure 4.3) contains spaces for names, dates, and a blank space requesting “any additional information” that the user can offer about their specific request. The “any additional information” field is for the user to write a brief narrative about the event or the information they are seeking, including their reasons for doing so, which assists the researching archivist in narrowing down which document types might be most relevant for the user’s specific case. These fields have been decided upon by the AHPN in order to facilitate the searches of reference archivists by identifying the most significant points of entry into the archive: names, dates and geographic locations. Therefore, the archive has structured its Solicitation form to accommodate the most likely searching possibilities and provide archivists background information that will be most productive when responding to a request.

For in person requests, an interviewing archivist¹¹⁰ of the Access to Information Unit, described as the “visible face” of the archive, examines the individual request and conducts an interview with the visitor (see Figure 4.2 “Initial Request”).¹¹¹ Reference interviews not only offer the user a single point of contact, but allow the interviewing archivist to obtain background information that may have been omitted by the user, either because they did not think it relevant (such as a pseudonym) or because they were unable to provide a specific detail, e.g. the geographic location in which an event occurred. These interviews give Reference Staff an initial impression of the scope and type of documentation that would be of interest to the user.

Once this preliminary reference interview is complete, the interviewing archivist scans the request form and submits it to the Search Team, a subset of five individuals working within the Access to Information Unit. The Head of the Search Team examines the request, does a preliminary examination in the Master database for previous solicitations, and notes down any relevant series or fonds that could assist the researcher in locating relevant documentation (see Figure 4.2, “Head of Search Team”). The Supervisor assigns the request to a researching archivist within the team, who searches through the TotalImage database to locate documentation that could pertain to the user’s request (Figure 4.2, “Search”). During this time, if the researching archivist is stalled or is unable to locate relevant documentation after an initial review of the request and search through the archive, the request might be sent back to the interviewing archivist for follow up with the user to ask for more information. Generally, within this interaction, the interviewing archivist may present the user with the documents that have already been located, and ask questions about whether these documents fit what the user was looking for, and request any additional information that the user may be able to provide. The background information of the user’s request and how these pieces of information

¹¹⁰ Since all archivists within this team are Reference Archivists, they have been assigned additional titles for clarity, e.g. interviewing archivist, researching archivist

¹¹¹ Interview, 140708, 08 July 2014

apply to the hierarchical structure of the archive make detail fundamental, as the smallest piece of data (a specific time, or spelling of a name) can provide valuable routes into searching the archive.

As an example, a user sought specific information about their parent, a rather well-known figure in Guatemala, yet researching archivists were unable to locate a single document for the user's request. In a follow up interview, the user shared that their parent received an award from the National Police in the late 1980s. By learning of the award, researching archivists were able to narrow down the search to one specific series, sift through the awards, and discover that the name printed on the award was misspelled. The search was then able to begin anew with the misspelled name acting as a starting point.

If no relevant documentation can be found to fulfill the request, the search is labeled "unsuccessful" and a report is sent back to the user with their original request, a list of all fonds, sub-fonds and series consulted, and an explanation of additional information that may be needed to successfully complete the request. The report is designed to increase transparency within the archive, so the user can see where the archive was searched, why documentation may not have been found (e.g., the date range the user is seeking is outside the scope of digitized materials, or the name on the request is not present within the archive), and offer resources should the user have an interest in continuing the search using the archive's the reading room. Researching archivists log each individual search conducted and the hours spent responding to a specific request into an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet data is used by the AHPN to gauge time spent on individual information requests, and to assess the efficiency of their searching process. These logs are examined by the Head of the Unit to check average searching times, locate specific requests that appear to be a challenge for researching archivists, and aid the archive in determining processing priorities should there be an increase in requests for a specific geographic department or date range. Users are encouraged to re-

submit their solicitations after three months, to give the archive sufficient time to process and digitize additional materials that may contain the information needed by the user.

Archivists ingest searches that are “successful” into the Base Maestra, where the researching archivist catalogs a short description of the request, each document, and page number, along with a reason for selection and topical assignment. Reasons for selection range from “This document contains information that may pertain to [insert name here],” to “This document contains information about person(s) that may be relevant to the event specified,” and are open-ended enough to allow the user to determine whether the document pertains to their request or not. The archive errs on providing as many documents as possible, and allowing the archivist to state a document “may be relevant” provides leeway should the document not pertain to the user’s request, contain an incorrect name, or belong to an event or person that is not relevant, but similar to, the user’s request. The interviewing archivist addresses these reasons for selection with the user, describes the aspects of the document that make it relevant, what document types are present within the request, and answers any additional questions the user might have. The archive uses topical assignments¹¹² as an internal method for giving contextual background to a specific document, grouping documents for broader investigations, and to aid archivists in responding to future requests. Each database ingest is examined by a separate Quality Assurance Team in the Access to Information Unit, with an individual archivist examining the information in the database, double-checking each document to ensure the page number and document identification number listed are correct, and compiling the information for dissemination to the user. Quality Assurance checks ensure that the information submitted to the database is accurate, and document citations do not have transposed numbers or mistyped page references. As with an unsuccessful search, the researching archivist will update the user’s Information Solicitation to reflect every fonds, sub-fonds, and series consulted, with the hours spent researching added to

¹¹² Topical assignments could be “Women and children within Guatemala,” “Requests that could relate to human rights abuses,” or “The document(s) contain information that may relate to the person(s) listed in the solicitation”

the separate metrics spreadsheet that the Head of the Access to Information Unit uses to assess efficiency within the Unit.

What determines ‘relevance’ in the context of an information request shifts between the type of user and their specific goals when making the request. The archive has several types of information requests, organized according to the type of requestor, with the most common users of the archive being “Social Organizations” and “Particular [Individual] Users.” Individual users typically access the archive for their own personal edification, searching for their own file or information about a missing family member, or to conduct academic research.¹¹³ There are also members of the former National Police who use the archive for documentation related to promotions or demotions and recognition of service to the National Police, which is necessary in order to apply for a pension upon retirement. Social organizations (non-profits and non-governmental organizations) and government agencies that make use of the archive are typically in the process of an ongoing investigation into violations of human rights or an overall assessment of violence during the Guatemalan armed conflict, but are not limited to those specific topics.

Each of these steps in responding to an information request requires awareness of the context of the archive. Awareness of police structures aids the interviewing archivist in posing questions to the user that will aid researching archivists in determining the types of documentation produced by the event, such as medical reports, news,

¹¹³ There have been multiple academic research projects centered within the AHPN. For examples, see: Aguilar Velásquez, María de los Ángeles, “From Saboteurs to Communists: University Student Movement and Police Repression in Guatemala” (The University of Texas at Austin, 2009), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/13744>. Jolón Morales, Carlos Estuardo, “XX Noche y Niebla en Guatemala: Una Aproximación a las Ejecuciones Arbitrarias en la Ciudad de Guatemala y su Periferia de 1979 a 1985” (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala., 2010), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/13523>. López Taks, Claudia Carolina, “Análisis comparativo de las ‘novedades’ del Segundo Cuerpo, Inspectoría General y la Jefatura departamental de Quetzaltenango, conocidas por el Director General de la Policía Nacional, durante el período de gobierno de facto del Gral. Efraín Ríos Montt (23 marzo 1982 al 8 agosto 1983)” (Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. Escuela de Ciencia Política., 2010), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/13522>. Cabrera Mariano, José Domingo, “Políticas y prácticas contrainsurgentes contra la organización estudiantil de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1970-1985” (Guatemala, C.A.: Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 2011), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/13745>.

memoranda, or operations plans. Researching archivists, the individuals who locate documentation within the archive in response to a request, employ their awareness of archival context to enter into and successfully searching the archive. Within the context of searching for and locating information in a provenance-based system, the behavior and tasks of researching archivists provide the most fruitful avenue for examining engagement with the AHPN's extensive documentation. Their well-worn pathways into the archive demonstrate how archivists are successfully navigating the structure of the archive, and which pieces of information are fundamental to a successful search.

DEVELOPING A SEARCH

Locating documents within the Access to Information Unit is comprised of a series of micro-processes that are shaped by the provenance and structure of the archive (and as a result, the organizational structures of the National Police) and the nature of the information request. As mentioned previously, although each search is unique and the individual archivists' approaches to locating information may differ slightly, all searches follow a similar pattern based upon 1) locating background information, from both the user request and external sources 2) distilling this information into names, dates, and locations to determine relevant fonds and document types, and 3) searching through fonds to locate documents (See Figure 4.4, "An Overview of the Searching Process"). Background information could be any data related to the user request and the structure and function of the National Police during the date range of the request. This information includes, but is not limited to, the names of any individuals involved in the event, family members, political affiliations, geographic location of the event, knowledge of security plans or operations that could have been taking place within the area or within the specified date range of the request, police stations that are located near the event or within geographic proximity to relatives or individuals that may have lodged complaints to the police, and whether there may be cadaver reports, medical reports, or hospital records generated as a result of the occurrence.

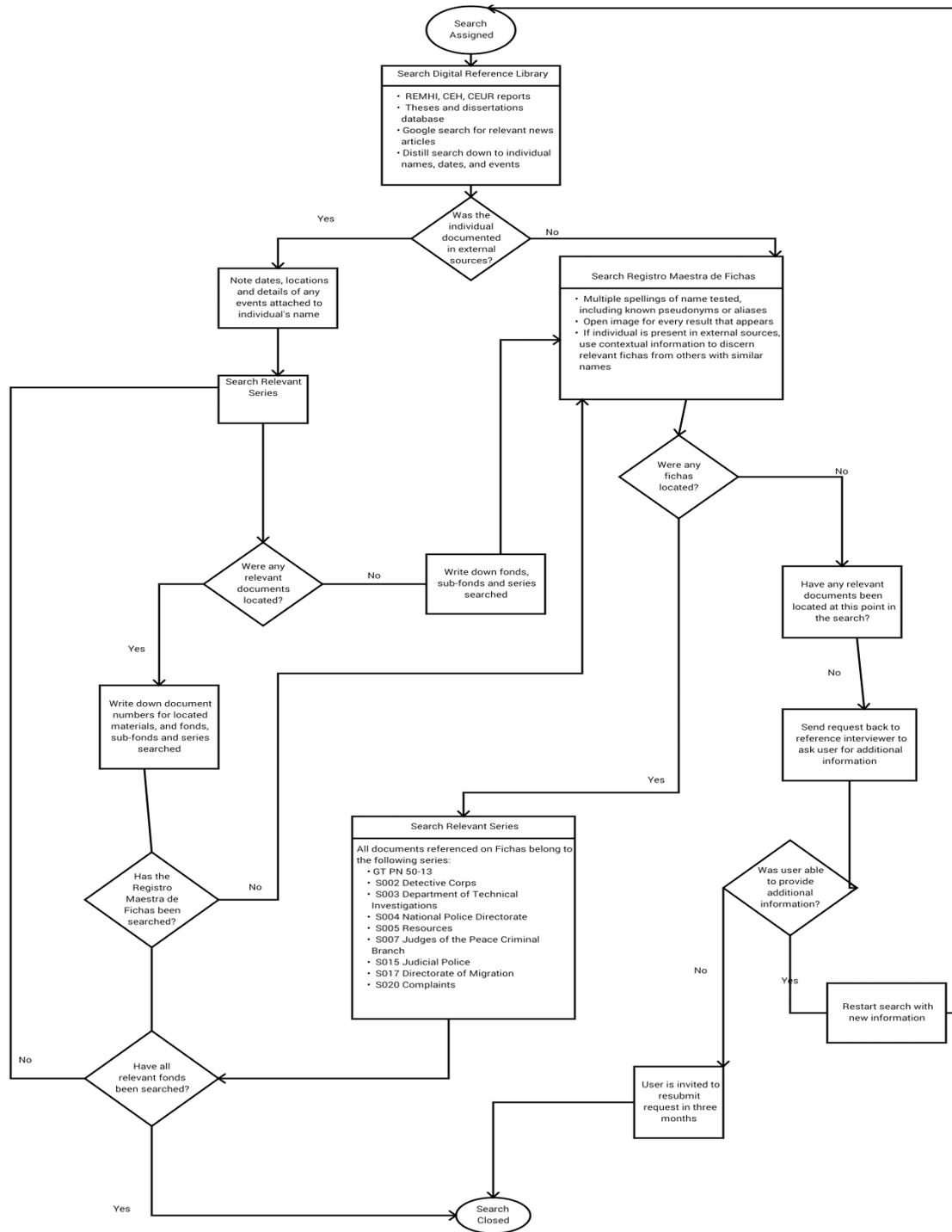


Figure 4.4 An Overview of the Search Process

Upon receiving their assigned search, the researching archivist first examines the request and takes notes on any background that may prove useful to the search, and notes any potential series or fonds that could contain relevant information. This examination process involves an analysis of the specific event (a death, a promotion, a complaint), the names, dates, and locations relevant in the request, and a listing of document types that may be listed by the interviewing archivist or appear most relevant to the search. After the archivist has thoroughly examined the request, they begin perusing external sources for potential entry points into the archive. External sources are primarily found in BibliotecAHPN, the archive's internal reference library, which contains any scholarship produced that heavily cites AHPN materials. Additional resources within the library are a mixture of reports by the Historical Clarification Committee (CEH), the Recovery of Historical Memory Project (REMHI), the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and materials published by the AHPN itself. Archivists will also make use of Internet searches and specific websites, including the National Security Archive¹¹⁴ and School of the Americas Watch.¹¹⁵ While searching external sources, archivists will search reports for similar names or events in relation to the user request as an attempt to confirm or clarify information provided by the user. Additionally, archivists will search the AHPN's publications to locate information on specific police stations, and note document types (e.g., if the event pertains to a death or disappearance, they will search through cadaver reports and reports of bodily injury) and names that may be related to the request.

External sources are fundamental to structuring a search, as there are few points of entry into the archive aside from names, dates, and specific geographic regions: data the user may be unable to provide. For example, if the Public Ministry requests information associated with a name, the archivist will search the CEH and REMHI reports to determine if the person has already been documented through outside sources; if they are located, it is far easier for the archivist to begin searching relevant series with

¹¹⁴ "The National Security Archive.html," n.d.

¹¹⁵ "SOA Watch Close the School of the Americas.html," n.d.

the additional details provided within the reports. Information about deaths, disappearances, political orientations, or specifics of an event surrounding an individual gives the archivist room to narrow down date ranges and geographic locations that the researching archivist can connect to relevant fonds. This information will shift which fonds and series the archivist searches, but also how they glean information from each individual document.

Once external sources have been examined, the archivist uses the information they have gathered from their research to distill the information request into three possible spaces for exploration: names, dates, and geographic locations. Parsing a search request into these seemingly basic elements allows the archivist to search through additional databases, such as the Base de Fichas and the Base Maestra, for documents that have already been cataloged, and aids them in narrowing down potential series for exploration. Names in particular are of vital importance,¹¹⁶ as the Base de Fichas is one of the more complete catalogs at the AHPN and fichas are a primary point of entry into the fonds of the Department of Criminological Investigations (DIC).

When researching archivists expand their search beyond the Base de Fichas and the Department of Criminological Investigations, they typically approach the search with a prioritized list of each fonds, sub-fonds, and series they would like to consult, or whether they need to consult scanned log books,¹¹⁷ which are integrated into their own fonds within the TotalImage database. A typical search will begin with a perusal of secondary sources, an examination of the Base de Fichas, and an examination of logbooks, which contain documentation of all items received by the Secretary for each

¹¹⁶ While names are fundamental to searching the archive, the National Police were inconsistent in spelling and documenting names, not to mention those who have gone through the archive unnamed, such as numerous “Cadavers XX,” within the archive. At present, the AHPN has engaged in a partnership with the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala in order to connect the bodies unearthed from unmarked graves with documents in the archive, in hopes of giving names to those whom the records of the National Police have silenced. See: Archivo Historico de la Policia Nacional, “Primer Intercambio de Información Entre El PNR, La FAFG Y El AHPN,” June 25, 2014.

¹¹⁷ The logbooks/books of the AHPN are entirely digitized at this moment, and generally list promotions within the ranks of the Police, and document receipt of documents between departments, albeit inconsistently.

department, as opposed to fichas which serve as an index of documents pertaining to one specific individual. Researching archivists possess a fundamental understanding of how documentation flowed between departments and the General Directorate, and how logbooks serve as an index documenting the movement of records from one department to another. As a result, researching archivists focus upon known quantities: documents that can be tracked between departments, specific record types that will act as guides to further documents (such as fichas), and logbooks, which act as a centralized locale for the police to record their flow of information.

Once log books have been searched, the researching archivist expands out into the larger fonds, primarily the General Directorate, as the fond should contain copies of all materials generated by the geographic departments and the different zones of the capital, with an accompanying entry in the previously searched log books. Time spent searching individual series and fonds can be brief, as archivists keep an eye on key elements of the document to determine if it contains information they are seeking. The archivist begins by scanning the date, determines the type of document (novedades/news, denuncia/complaint, memoranda, medical report), and then skims for relevant names within the document. If no relevant documents are found within the date range specified on the user request, the archivist will move on to other fonds and series until all possibilities have been exhausted. The decision to leave a fond or series is at the discretion of the researching archivist, but a researching archivist will generally consider their work complete within a fond or series once they've examined all documentation within the specified date range, or have been able to determine that the document types present within the series are not relevant to the information request.

Each of these steps within the process: examining the user request and external sources, sifting through databases and into the archive itself, necessitates that the archivist understand how the police functioned on a daily basis. Comprehension of the informational flow of the National Police, with reports moving from geographic areas into the General Directorate and from the General Directorate back into the smaller

departments, means the archivist knows the fonds of the General Directorate should contain copies of most documentation generated by the National Police. Being able to parse this knowledge into the three overarching functions of the National Police's administration (education, investigation, and corps/departments), researching archivists can also make informed decisions about which fonds will have documentation relevant to a specific request. The following two search narratives identify how these tools apply specifically to two user requests observed during my time at the AHPN. These scenarios, while not illustrative of all requests received, provide a practical demonstration of reference archivists' ability to implement their knowledge of archival context and the functions of the National Police to work their way through specific places within the archive.

Sample Search: Looking for a Specific Person

A user is seeking documentation about a physical assault they experienced in the 1980s. The user provided their full name, the date, and an approximate geographic location of the incident.¹¹⁸ They had an interview with the reference archivist, who noted down that the user was looking for "their file," essentially any and all documents the police created with the user's name or containing information about the user and specifically any documents that were related to the assault, such as a complaint, medical reports, or notices written by the police. The interviewing archivist also wrote down whether there might be police reports of the assault and a narrative of the incident that could provide the researching archivist with additional information in their search. The reference request was then scanned and submitted to the team of researching archivists, where it was examined by the head of the Research Team, who was unable to find any documents in a preliminary search through the databases, and assigned to a single researching archivist.

¹¹⁸ As this scenario pertains to a specific information request, details about the date, geographic location, name and gender of the individual have all been omitted to protect the user

The researching archivist, unable to locate the name of the user in external sources, began the search by locating the individual's name within the Base de Fichas (see Figure 4.5, "Searching for a User's File"). However, no fichas with the user's complaint, documentation of medical treatment, or records acknowledging the incident were located within the fichas attached to the user's name. The researching archivist sent the request back to the interviewing archivist along with the small amount of documentation located. With the returned request in hand, the interviewing archivist contacted the user to ask if there was additional information the user could provide, such as an alternate spelling of their name, specific hospital names if they sought medical attention, any police reports or complaints they may have filed. Meanwhile, the researching archivist continued to search through reports from the geographic location specified by the user. While re-examining the user's request, the researching archivist realized that the rural location where the assault occurred was on the immediate border between two separate departments, and searched through the neighboring department's medical reports and information.

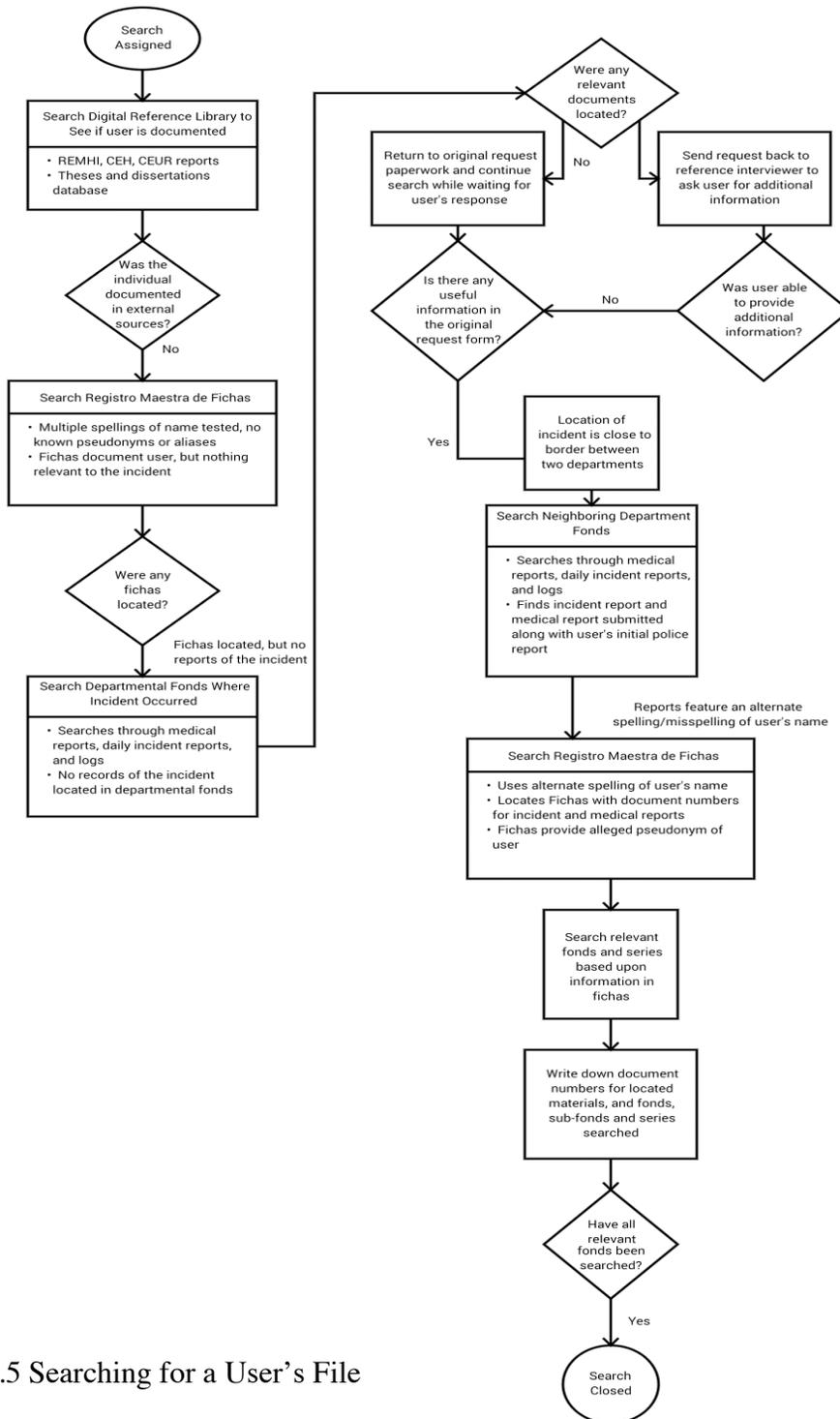


Figure 4.5 Searching for a User's File

The researching archivist located several documents, including a police report about the incident, a medical examination, and photographs of the injuries sustained. Within the report, the user's name is not only spelled differently, but the first and second last names are switched. With this new information, the researching archivist essentially conducts the previous search process in reverse: by obtaining the user's name as it was written in the report, they were able to locate an additional ficha with the user's information, linkages to the medical report, and discover a purported pseudonym.¹¹⁹ This pseudonym, when searched for in the Base de Fichas, led to police reports about the surveillance of this individual and their supposed participation in 'subversive' groups, as well as additional reports featuring only the person's pseudonym.¹²⁰ Ultimately, within two days of searching, the researching archivist was able to provide documentation of the incident, in addition to the user's "file," a combination of all fichas, reports, and documentation that "may be relevant to the user's request."¹²¹

While this search is not a unique case, it speaks to both the present and past political climate of the archive and the researching archivists depth of knowledge when conducting a search. The researching archivist's awareness of the structures and functions of the police and their skills of deductive reasoning, when combined with technological tools such as a centralized database structure, allowed them to examine neighboring geographic departments, and note the possibility that the individual sought medical treatment outside the area of the incident. The types of background information that fueled this specific archivist's task were awareness of proximity between departments, geographical knowledge of the rural area in which the incident occurred (the researching archivist, when explaining their 'breakthrough,' mentioned that based

¹¹⁹ While use of pseudonyms are generally associated with participation in groups such as the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, it is important to note that the records of the police do not contain concrete evidence of any individual's political leanings, behaviors, or even use of said pseudonym.

¹²⁰ 140717_0023 17 July 2014

¹²¹ 140709_0002, 09 July 2014*

* It is unknown whether the user did not recall seeking medical treatment in a separate department, but it appears that after the incident the person walked to a police station in the next department, filed a report, and sought medical attention.

upon the location, the hospital in a neighboring department would be easier to access on foot¹²²), and in-depth knowledge of the context in which the police operated. The archivist, having extensive experience working with fichas, knew that there was very rarely consistency in the spelling or writing of names, as the police were not known for accuracy in reporting individuals.¹²³ Also important is the archivist's ability to connect the user's possible pseudonym to additional police reports through the Base de Fichas. As previously stated, names are a fundamental point of insertion into the archive, with the Base de Fichas facilitating the archivist's ability to quickly search (and re-search) the user's name and pseudonym within the archive.

Regarding the missing pseudonym, it could be that the user did not actually have or use a pseudonym, the user did not think the pseudonym relevant to the search, or they decided to omit usage of the pseudonym because it would potentially 'out' them as belonging to a subversive group in the past. As previous involvement, or alleged involvement within subversive groups could potentially impact one's daily life even within modern Guatemala, a country that is still struggling through the aftereffects of its civil war and slowly attempting to prosecute wrongdoing, the user may consider it in their best interest to distance themselves from previous actions or identities that are documented within the archive. Additionally, the Guatemalan National Police Archive is only able to provide documentation that represents how the police viewed the world and what actions they may have taken about it. Documentation of a pseudonym or reports indicating that a person had specific political leanings do not definitively prove anything aside from the fact that these statements were what the police thought, wrote, or believed. The possible motives of this specific user are irrelevant within the searching process, but the ongoing challenge of potential omissions or inaccuracies within user requests emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive knowledge on the part of the archivist when

¹²² Interview, 140717_0024, 17 July 2014

¹²³ As a side note, the spelling and record-keeping of the police were at times so inconsistent or poorly written that the National Police required writing, spelling, and literacy classes for members of the police force. Interesting!

examining the hierarchical structures of the AHPN. Had the researching archivist not re-examined the request, looked at hospitals and police stations within the region, and determined that the user could have obtained medical care in a neighboring department, the search would have been unsuccessful.

Searching for a user's "file" within the AHPN will generally involve a similar search pattern, though each individual's file and documentation may be different. The structures of the police's investigation units mean that fichas and records generated about individuals, e.g., those under surveillance or arrest, possess a similar bureaucratic logic. Individuals of interest to the police were documented, with these records documented within fichas bearing the individual's name to act as an index. The nature of this request demonstrates the possibility of exceptions to the rule, and the need for archivists to not only understanding how the functions of the National Police dictated their record creation and recordkeeping, but also the external forces surrounding the incident, such as geography and time, that impacted both the user's actions and the police's. Geographic proximity shifted the user's behavior (seeking medical attention in a specific locale), which simultaneously impacted the actions and records generated by the police. While the hospital report and records regarding the incident are consistent with the police's recordkeeping protocols, the user's decision to seek medical attention in a specific location meant that a geographic department unconnected to the incident was the entity responsible for documenting said incident. By connecting the record to the user's behavior (where they sought medical care) the archivist is able to locate the record by understanding how the police generated materials, which department would have created the records, and how the records would have been maintained. This complex process of linking behaviors to functions to record creation is one aspect of how archivists are able to navigate the AHPN.

Sample Search: Finding the Cofradia

An academic researcher from the United States is seeking information about all individuals who have been associated with La Cofradia (The Brotherhood), a military intelligence organization that gathered intelligence on potential subversive groups within the country. The Cofradia was well known for corruption, illegal tactics, and eventually had several members indicted in the 1990s on charges of political corruption, embezzling, and conspiracy.¹²⁴ The request asked for any and all documentation about members of La Cofradia, including a few specific names that the user wanted located within the archive. There was no limitation or specificity provided on the types of documents requested, so the solicitation was a broad search, the results of which would inform the user's own academic research.

The primary challenges with this request are the scope of documents requested, and the issue of finding names or individuals specifically associated with the Cofradia. Movement of information and intelligence between the military and the police was limited, with the police only being notified in the event that the military would be in the geographic area, or if police support was needed as part of large scale military operations.¹²⁵ As a result, the researching archivist's knowledge is limited to the information that can be located within the General Directorate, specifically focusing upon correspondence between the military and the police. Frequently, documents of this nature do not explicitly state the individuals involved in the operation, nor do they specify what actions the military will be undertaking. Therefore, the user's search is already bounded by the limited information the police had on hand or received from the military concerning intelligence operations.

¹²⁴ Susan C. Peacock and Adriana Beltrán, "Hidden Powers," *Illegal Armed Groups in Post Conflict Guatemala and the Forces Behind Them, A Washington Office on Latin America Special Report*, Washington DC, 2003, <http://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/downloadable/Citizen%20Security/past/HiddenPowers%20%20Exec.%20Summary.pdf>.

¹²⁵ Interview, 140721_0030, 21 July 2014

The second challenge of the search is the lack of specificity regarding names and document types requested. While the user has specifically listed some names in their solicitation, others were located within outside sources.¹²⁶ While searching through external sources, some documentation identified high-ranking political officials as members of the Cofradia. However, as these individuals were still politically active and the government had not taken legal action against them to clearly connect them with the Cofradia, the archive did not consider this documentation verifiable evidence. To include this information in the response would be tantamount to endorsing, or verifying, claims that this individual was a member of the Cofradia, when the archive could not point to a specific, externally verified connection between the individual and the organization.¹²⁷ The AHPN does not consider reference services to be directly involved in the interpretation of documents, and therefore considered including this documentation potentially misleading. It was decided amongst the Head of the Unit to Access to Information and the Research Team that unless there was compelling evidence of an individual's membership in the Cofradia, such as an indictment, or if they were no longer an active political official, or if they were already listed on the user's request, the name listed would not be searched out within the archive.

¹²⁶ Interview 140721_0028, 21 July 2014

¹²⁷ Interview 140724_0031, 24 July 2014

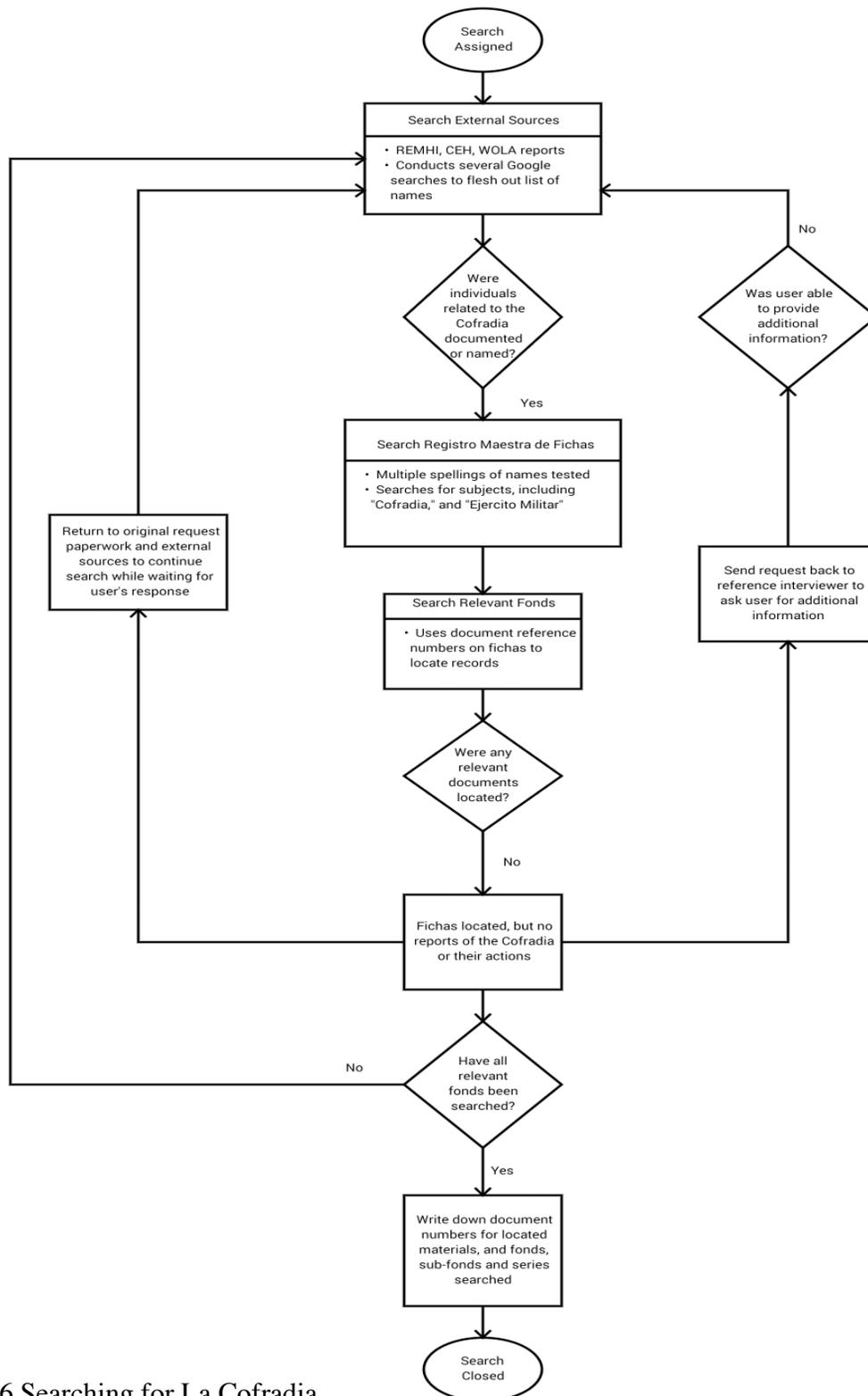


Figure 4.6 Searching for La Cofradia

To begin the search, the researching archivist's only potential entry into the archive was based upon names gleaned from external sources, with the few names provided by the user serving as starting points. The archivist entered an ongoing loop of searching through external sources such as BibliotecAHPN, in addition to Internet searches and using specific websites, such as SOAWatch.¹²⁸ While little information was found on the Cofradia outside of identifying its existence and a few well-known members, BibliotecAHPN contains reports from the Washington Office on Latin America, one of which, "Poderes Ocultos/Hidden Powers," provided a brief history of the Cofradia and a list of several names of members, including those who had recently been prosecuted for political corruption.¹²⁹ The researching archivist used this report as a starting point for their search into the archive, and wrote down names that fit the requirements set forth by the user and agreed upon by the Access to Information Unit.

With a list of approximately fifteen names, the archivist turned to the Base de Fichas to locate documents pertaining to the individuals on their list (See Figure 4.6, "Searching for La Cofradia"). Beginning with the names listed by the user, the archivist engages in a cyclical pattern of searching, moving from external sources to the Base de Fichas, and then to the corresponding documents listed, before returning to external sources. After several hours, with the list of names exhausted, the researching archivist asked the interviewing archivist to return to the user for additional names, specific document types sought, the user's expectations of which documents pertaining to the military the police may have had in their possession, or the possibility of a specific document list or thematic needs. The archivist then searched the Base Maestra to examine previous searches and determine if users have previously requested documentation about specific users. Within the Base Maestra, the researching archivist located a request for a file of information about one person listed by the user, and wrote down the case number before returning to the Base Maestra. In addition to the original

¹²⁸ <http://www.soaw.org/>

¹²⁹ Peacock and Beltrán, "Hidden Powers."

list of names, the archivist expanded the search to include topics such as “Ejército Militar,” “General,” “Coronel,” and “Cofradia” in the event that some of the subjects themselves have fichas. By searching according to military title or rank, the archivist could examine fichas for any ranking military officers, in case there was a misspelled or incorrect name listed on the ficha.

The user was non-responsive to the request for additional information, so the researching archivist continued operating within their cycle from fichas to documents to external sources and back to fichas, and after four days the search is closed. While deemed successful because sufficient documentation was located to aid with the user’s request, the archivist also put a note in the request form encouraging the user to come and conduct their own search in the reading room to enhance the documents located and perhaps find materials the user may consider more relevant. Due to the lack of documentation of correspondence between the military and the police, and the difficulty of searching for information that is not tied to specific data (such as a particular event), the user was told that if the request was resubmitted with more specific dates, geographic locations, and events in mind, the search could be resumed.

This request, although belonging to a specific user, is considered an academic investigation. The AHPN makes a distinction between a “request” and an “investigation,” with the latter being considered a broad request that generally pertains to an academic user’s research. In this case, the user was in the process of conducting research into military operations within Guatemala during the armed conflict and was specifically seeking information about the Cofradia to examine intelligence operations within the country. An information request, on the other hand, is usually a finite or bounded request, meaning the user is requesting documentation related to a specific event, name, or moment in time, in lieu of an open ended request for “anything pertaining to military operations within Guatemala,” which does not have specific names or date ranges attached to it. While governmental agencies tend to request a broad range of documentation, they will generally request documents about a specific name, which

means the researching archivist has a clear beginning and end to their research process, as opposed to casting a wide net of “documents about human rights violations.”

As this was an academic search, the archive will search for relevant documentation, but will ultimately return anything and everything relevant to the user and allow the user to judge which documentation is or is not relevant to their request. For thematic searches such as these, the overarching goal is not to construct a narrative or attribute meaning to each document, but instead to provide an aggregation of documentation with its provenance and contextual background intact, and permit the user to make their own judgment about what the documents mean. The closing advice to the user to visit the archive and conduct additional research in the reading room offers the archive an opportunity to educate an academic user in the tools available to them, while also allowing the user to search for the exact documentation they are seeking.

CONCLUSION: FOSTERING ARCHIVAL LITERACY

Although the archive’s focus upon provenance and original order when structuring their collections may at first be daunting to users,¹³⁰ the maintenance of these structures permit both the successful navigation of the AHPN and enable user understanding. Primarily, the archivists’ own knowledge of the National Police, and “what the world looked like to them and what they did about it,”¹³¹ informs every step of the research process. Archivists translate external factors such as time, geography, and individual names into the structures of the archive by maintaining in-depth knowledge of how the police viewed and interpreted these factors in their own recordkeeping system. The geographical departments within the AHPN correspond to Guatemala’s own internal state departments, with the police maintaining documents in chronological order and

¹³⁰ Polona Vilar and Alenka Šauperl, “Archival Literacy: Different Users, Different Information Needs, Behaviour and Skills,” in *Information Literacy. Lifelong Learning and Digital Citizenship in the 21st Century*, ed. Serap Kurbanoğlu et al., Communications in Computer and Information Science 492 (Springer International Publishing, 2014), 149–59, http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-14136-7_16.

¹³¹ Ball, Patrick, “Technology, Access to Information, and Democracy.”

using an index card system to serve as guides to their records. Archivists in turn use the same filing knowledge to re-locate documents that were originally filed and maintained by the police, a behavior that is facilitated due to the archive's preservation of original order and provenance.

The AHPN has created their technological tools, such as databases, as a system for representing archival context through a system that can centralize discrete pieces of information outside of the complex structures of the archive. Databases act as a vital entre into the archive and guide the search processes of researching archivists, as names, dates, and geographic locations dictate the shape of a specific search. By instantiating this knowledge into several tools, researching archivists have created replicable routes into the archive that they can use to repeatedly enter into the archive. In distilling information requests down to components such as name, date and geography, archivists are able to structure their searches across similar pathways, while allowing for flexibility in response to new and different sources of information (such as pseudonyms) as the search develops.

Fostering Archival Literacy

Researching archivists have spent years developing familiarity with the recordkeeping structures of the National Police, and their searching behaviors and decision-making are the manifestation of this awareness of archival context. The police made choices about recordkeeping and record creation in connection with names, dates, and geographic location. As a result, fostering an understanding of how vital geographic and chronological information are in traversing the records of the police can aid both researchers and reference archivists in understanding the work processes behind locating documents. While large collections can prove difficult to navigate, proper contextual information around the creation and usage of the record allow for deeper and more meaningful interpretations of the document, in addition to facilitating the creation of tools (such as databases) to locate necessary information. One goal of maintaining the original context of the archive "...is making archival users knowledgeable rather than loaded

down, however efficiently, with facts and copies of detached documents floating around devoid of context.”¹³² By maintaining the original recordkeeping systems of the National Police, the archive is preserving the records as evidence of the police’s own thought processes and behaviors: how they generated records, why they generated records, and how these records were preserved for future use. This evidential value is fundamental to preserving the memory of the National Police, while at the same time facilitating the informational value that can be gleaned from the record. In studying the search processes of reference archivists, it becomes clear that the National Police were not an unintelligible structure, and searches are not wild guesses or random perusing of documents, but instead a highly structured process based upon their own in-depth knowledge of archival context.

By documenting these search processes, the work of reference archivists is given new clarity and transparency, allowing potential researchers and users of the archive to understand how to translate their own research request into a structured search through the materials of the AHPN. These diagrams, while not comprehensive, are an attempt at transparency and archival literacy. The flowcharts highlight moments where archivists must ask questions, re-group, and return to the user for information in developing a search, and highlight again that while the reference archivist is conducting the search, it is the user’s information request that guides the archivist’s application of knowledge. Pieces of data as provided by the user and found in secondary sources give the archivist tools to work within the archive’s context and locate information. While determinations of relevance rely heavily upon tacit knowledge and information that may only come from years of working with the same collection, these diagrams contextualize a search that is essentially, each and every time, a needle in a haystack. By diagramming out the process of searching for documentation, it becomes clear that the pathways taken by the researching archivists when engaging with the collection represent tried and true methods based upon archival context.

¹³² Cook, “Viewing the World Upside Down.”

THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF THE AHPN: TRANSLATING THE WORK OF THE REFERENCE ARCHIVIST

INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES OF USING THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

How do the techniques for locating information employed by reference archivists apply to digital collections? As the Digital Archive of the AHPN¹³³ relies upon the same intellectual control and maintenance of original order and provenance as the physical archive, users will encounter the same challenges with the digital interface as they would in situ at the AHPN, although presented through a different medium. Users of the Digital Archive have stated that the archive feels obscure, and that it is oftentimes difficult to find a point of entry, even with the wealth of user guides and reference manuals available.¹³⁴ There are numerous reasons that the Digital Archive can feel opaque to users, amongst them being a limited searching capability for locating documents, a user interface that requires a researcher to effectively ‘drill-down’ into the collections, and the difficulty of finding a starting point when researching within the Digital Archive. However, there are several researching behaviors identified with researching archivists at the AHPN that can mitigate these challenges and provide users with a more productive research experience.

This chapter examines the struggles associated with engaging the Digital Archive for research, and provides opportunities for new searching strategies based upon the work of the researching archivists at the AHPN. As archival context is the primary mode for comprehending the hierarchical structure of the archive, users must develop comfort with the functions and recordkeeping of the National Police to successfully interact with the Digital Archive. After highlighting the initial challenges users face in the Digital Archive, this chapter delves into specific tools for researchers hoping to use the Digital Archive to locate primary sources.

¹³³ For the sake of brevity, I will use the term “Digital Archive” throughout this chapter to describe the Digital Archive of the AHPN.

¹³⁴ Field Notes, 10 July 2014

Search Capability

Metadata and description for each individual document in the Digital Archive is limited. As a result, search functionality is comprised of name searches, topical searches that have fichas, and filters to narrow date range. At the moment the only keyword-based searches that the archive supports is looking through the Registro Maestra de Fichas, a primary point of entry into the archive but not always the most useful tool for an academic researcher. In order to use the Registro Maestra de Fichas, users must already be familiar with the names they are looking for, and the idea of a “snowballing” search, where a ficha or single document guides the user to more documents and opens up further avenues for searching the archive, will be foreign to a researcher. Furthermore, there is minimal support for using the Registro to find personnel within the Policía Nacional, unless they possessed a record card for crimes or lodged a formal complaint before joining the police.¹³⁵

An additional source of difficulty in name searches is the need to “play with the possibilities”¹³⁶ within the website search interface. As one name may have numerous spellings, or the police may have failed to write down a full name or spelled it correctly, the user must be able to discern if the ficha returned applies to the specific person they are seeking or if it belongs to an individual with the same name. When researching archivists at the AHPN locate a ficha and are unable to determine if it applies to the request they are researching, they will commonly include links to the document and provide it to the user, with the stipulation that the document “may” pertain to the person or person(s) mentioned within the request.¹³⁷ As a result, users who possess limited experience working with the Digital Archive may be overcome by the influx of information provided in a name search, without possessing the tools need to analyze each individual document for relevance to their research needs. As opposed to submitting a

¹³⁵ Interview 140723_0031, 23 July 2014

¹³⁶ Interview, 140709_0001, 09 July 2014

¹³⁷ Field Notes, 08 July 2014

request to the Access to Information Unit where users receive a grouping of documents in response to an information request, a user of the Digital Archive is responsible for document selection at each level of the searching process.

User Interface

The Digital Archive underwent a series of user tests in order to examine the functionality of the website and its capacity to be navigated successfully by users. However, there is still a steep learning curve present for individuals who have limited experience in working with provenance-based collections. The interface of the archive is primarily structured so that users can navigate to the relevant series they are seeking through a top-down approach involving a series of collapsible menus that allows the user to expand and collapse locations (See Figure 5.1).¹³⁸

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `ahpn.lib.utexas.edu/search/carpeta/gtpn3001s002`. The page features a search results interface with a left-hand navigation menu and a main content area.

Left-hand navigation menu:

- [1870-1879](#) (539)
- [1880-1889](#) (542)
- [1890-1899](#) (254)
- [1900-1909](#) (17)
- [1910-1919](#) (11)
- [1920-1929](#) (128)
- [1930-1939](#) (520)
- [1940-1949](#) (1207)
- [1950-1959](#) (1849)
- [1960-1969](#) (30911)
- [1970-1979](#) (873914)
- [1980-1989](#) (1427433)
- [1990-1997](#) (116128)
- [Without Date](#) (1309310)

Filter by Name:

- [A](#) (176035)
- [B](#) (55729)

Main Content Area:

- [Search](#) (3643447)
 - [GT PN](#) (3156459)
 - [30 ARCHIVOS DIRECCION GENERAL](#) (230055)
 - [01 Secretaría General](#) (222287)
 - [S002 Correspondencia Enviada](#) (8648)

8648 Documents

Contents	Box	Date	Alphabetical Order	File	Sub File	Book	Description	Code
457 Documents	300127	1970-XX-XX--1982-XX-XX		1				453731829112007
491 Documents	300127	1970-XX-XX--1982-XX-XX		2				1251481829112007
369 Documents	300127	1970-XX-XX--1982-XX-XX		3				5449141929112007
		1970-XX-XX--1982-XX-XX						

Figure 5.1 A screenshot of the Digital Archive showing the collapsible menu and document list

¹³⁸ “About AHPN.”

Engaging in this approach requires the user to possess some of the expert-level familiarity with archival context researching archivists have demonstrated at the physical archive, including the capacity to identify relevant fonds and series, and the willingness to examine numerous documents quickly by opening documents within the website's interface, either by opening each individual link and navigating back to the search results, or through the use of browser tabs.

When searching through the Digital Archive of the AHPN, users are shown the location of resulting documents and then use the collapsible menu structure to 'drill down' into the series that contain the documents (See Figure 5.2). This method of perusal preserves the intellectual grouping of the documents, offering the user information on which fonds, sub-fonds, or series they have navigated to, and providing baseline information about the information structures of the Policía Nacional. In addition, each fonds and series links to a finding aid offering the user additional description about the structures and functions of different departments and administrative bodies within the National Police. This contextual information is vital to understanding the internal frameworks of the National Police, but for a newer user of archives the expanse of information—finding aids, fonds, and series—can be overwhelming.

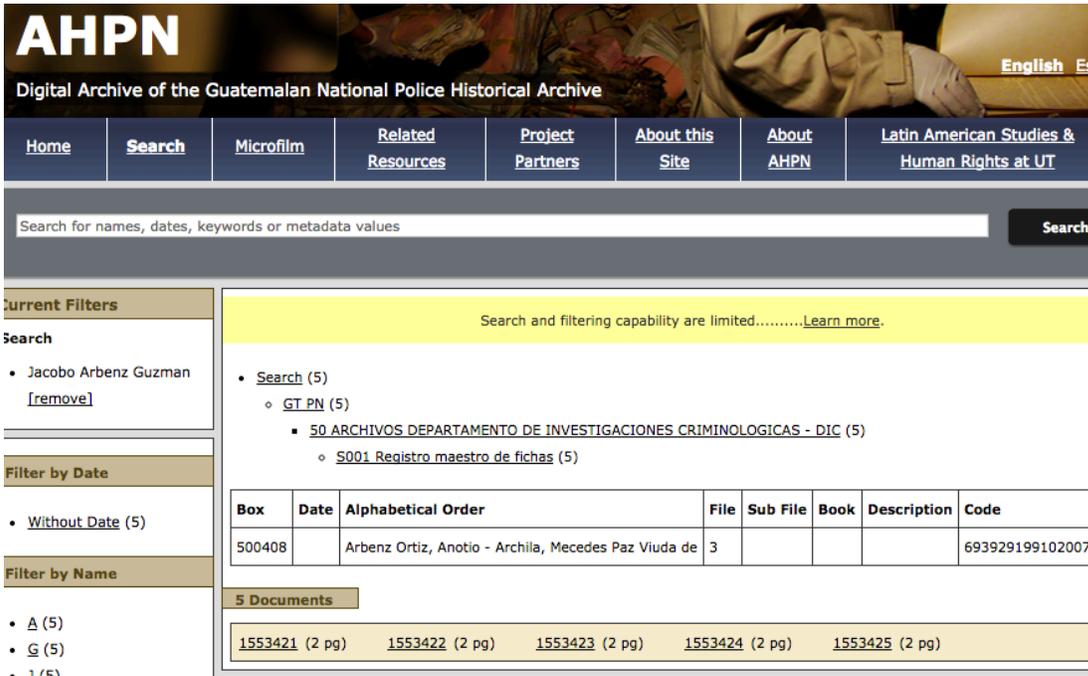


Figure 5.2 Screenshot of the Digital Archive showing search results when searching for a name, in this case “Jacobo Arbenz Guzman”

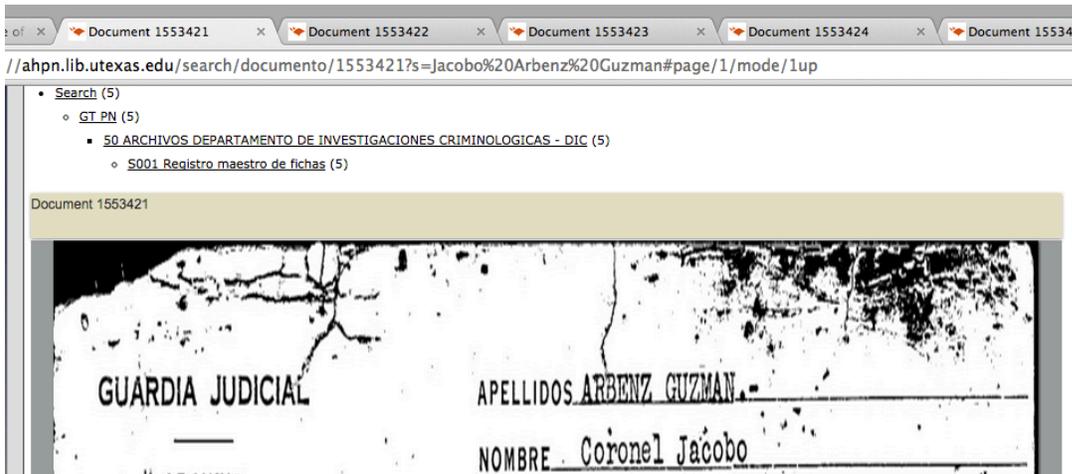


Figure 5.3 Screenshot showing document browser of the Digital Archive and tabbed browsing of documents

The opacity of the user interface is generally a result of the limited metadata for each individual document. When examining the results of a search, users must view each individual document by opening a separate link in order to discover information about the document's contents and applicability to their research. This browsing method is consistent with the tools available at the physical archive, although the TotalImage database contains a scrolling feature that allows researching archivists to rapidly peruse large groups of documents at once, whereas the browser function requires each new document be opened separately by clicking on its link. Ultimately, this difference is a fixture of digital repository structures and is not a specific limitation of the Digital Archive itself. These challenges of use, however, can contribute to dissuade a researcher from engaging with the Digital Archive if they feel the searching process would require too much time for too little payoff in terms of locating relevant documentation.

Finding a Point of Entry

The challenges present in using the Digital Archive are not a function of the archive's lack of transparency or the Digital Archive's inability to incorporate useful tools into the website interface, but are a microcosm of the same challenges that a user would face when researching at the physical AHPN. The user is essentially unguided in their search unless they opt to examine the user guides present and read the website information, but even with these tools at hand they must first successfully know which fonds, sub-fonds or series they wish to search to locate documents. For a first-time user of the archive, knowing how to start searching can be a daunting task.

User requests received at the AHPN are primarily individuals seeking specific documentation or data, or government bodies looking for documentation related to persons or events currently being investigated. The nature of academic research makes searching through the AHPN for thematic or structural documentation difficult, unless the researcher has a name, date, or specific event in place. Large-scale projects, such as the previously examined search for all documentation related to La Cofradia, will by nature be much more time consuming than a user who seeks a single person's file. The breadth

of academic research and the extensive amount of documentation present within the Digital Archive means that finding a point of entry will at times be challenging. However, by mirroring the search processes of researching archivists, as discussed in the following section, users will be able to more competently make use of the Digital Archive.

TRANSLATING THE WORK OF THE REFERENCE ARCHIVIST TO THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The limitations present within the Digital Archive's technological structures and limited metadata are overarching issues present in numerous digital repositories. Although there may not be a feasible alternative for creating a more user-friendly or subject-structured online repository for the digital materials of the AHPN, users can rely upon external resources and develop an awareness of archival context to more easily insert themselves into the archive. This section examines some of the tactics of researching archivists at the AHPN and how these approaches to locating information can inform the user's interactions with the Digital Archive.

User Guides and External (Secondary) Sources

When attempting to shift the trained, specialized knowledge of reference archivists to a digital collection it becomes clear that a digital repository cannot replicate the years of tacit knowledge produced within the AHPN's Access to Information Unit. It is not feasible to suggest that a user spend extensive time and energy developing the same expert knowledge base possessed by researching archivists at the AHPN, but there are a few tactics that can be translated directly into the user's engagement with the AHPN.

The most easily replicated behavior of reference archivists when engaging with the Digital Archive of the AHPN exists in using secondary sources to identify the best possible points of entry into the Digital Archive. Researching archivists spend an extensive period of time using the materials produced by the AHPN in combination with external sources to construct a narrative of events and identify bodies within the National Police that may have recorded, received, or produced documentation related to the event.

Most searches begin with the Researching Archivist examining the documentation of BibliotecAHPN in addition to conducting internet searches in an attempt to construct either a narrative of a specific event, or to distill a search down to specific component pieces, such as a name, date range, and geographic location. Users of the Digital Archive may not necessarily be searching for a specific event, but historical points in time can serve as a fundamental method for engaging with the archive. By first identifying the date range, police activity, or thematic point of interest, the user can engage with secondary sources to identify specific geographic departments or document types of interest and search within the appropriate series, as opposed to feeling lost amidst the 60 fonds represented within the Digital Archive.

Understanding and Employing Reference Guides

A primary misconception encountered amongst users of the Digital Archive is that the corpus of knowledge produced by the AHPN about the National Police is intended to be read in its entirety if a user is to fully understand the structures and functions of the National Police. In a conference presentation, one potential user lamented the website's instructions to 'review the user guide,' stating "...but the user guide itself is around 400 pages!"¹³⁹ While a 400-page guide seems excessive for a potential user who wishes to get their hands dirty in the digital archival dust, these guides act more specifically as reference manuals, designed to provide answers to specific questions.

Researching Archivists make regular and consistent use of the guides produced by the AHPN, though when asked, several state they have not read them in their entirety, nor have they read the Committee for Historical Clarification's several volume report, though they reference it regularly.¹⁴⁰ Instead, Researching Archivists use these guides to identify events, names, or operations, most commonly searching through .pdf copies of the

¹³⁹ Julian Etienne, "Exhibiting Terror: The Case of the Digitized Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive," March 1, 2014, <http://www.ilassa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ILASSA34-program-final-for-web.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, 140711_011 and 140723_0031, 11 July 2014 and 23 July 2014

documents. In one search, the Researching Archivist examined a district map of Guatemala City, identified that a specific zone was under the control of the *Segundo Cuerpo* of the Police, and opened *La Policía Nacional y Sus Estructuras*¹⁴¹, searching specifically for “Segundo Cuerpo” within the text to determine information about the corps structure, function, and types of documents produced in the course of administrative business.¹⁴² When examining requests from government agencies, such as the Ministerio Público or Procurador de Derechos Humanos, Researching Archivists commonly begin examining *Guatemala, Memoria del Silencio* for lists of names that will tie an individual to a disappearance, death, or torture within a specific department or date range.¹⁴³

This selective examination of reference sources can aid users who have already identified names or dates they wish to investigate further in the Digital Archive by offering background information and providing a starting point for examining the materials of the AHPN. By first identifying the names of “known”¹⁴⁴ victims, in addition to possible geographic locations and dates for events, the user can more effectively parse their search into specific fonds and series. If an individual disappeared within the department of Quetzaltenango, the user knows that documentation within GT PN 09, Departmental Archives of Quetzaltenango, would be an effective starting point. If the user continues to search through the AHPN’s list of documents that can aid human rights investigations,¹⁴⁵ they can further refine their search needs into examining specifically Providencias, or Series 7, 8 and 9, within the Quetzaltenango Departmental Fonds.

¹⁴¹ Guatemala, *La Policía Nacional Y Sus Estructuras*.

¹⁴² Interview 140710_0009, 10 July 2014

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (Guatemala), *Guatemala, Memory of Silence = Tz’inil Na’tab’al ; Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, Conclusions and Recommendations*, 2nd. ed (Guatemala, Guatemala: CEH, 1998).

¹⁴⁵ Aguirre, Carlos, Archivo Historico de la Policia Nacional, and Doyle, Kate, *From Silence to Memory: Revelations of the AHPN* (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Libraries, 2013).

DEVELOPING FAMILIARITY WITH ARCHIVAL CONTEXT

As the Digital Archive is based upon provenance and original order, users must be aware of the recordkeeping structures of the National Police in order to successfully find a point of entry into the archive. External sources, once examined, should provide the researcher with a valuable starting point by allowing them to distill their search into names, dates, and geographic locations of interest, preparing them to move into and out of the archive based upon their knowledge of how the police maintained their records. Given the informational flow of the National Police, the General Directorate remains a valuable starting point for any user of the archive, as the General Director acted as a command center for the entire police force, and documentation moved freely between the geographic departments and the General Directorate.

In order to develop familiarity with the police's recordkeeping structures, the user must engage in an iterative process of examining external sources, and then attempting to place their specific interests onto the recordkeeping structures of the National Police. By using the reports published by the AHPN, users can create keyword searches within the .pdf reports to locate sites of interest and document types that may be relevant to their request. As an example, if a user has defined a specific event of interest, such as a robbery or crime reported within a specific geographic department, they can begin by narrowing their date range to the relevant month and year of the event, and proceed to examine *Novedades*, or the daily news reports transmitted from the departments to the General Directorate. *Novedades* provide single line summaries of specific dates and can aid the user in confirming that the police were aware of an event and therefore generated records surrounding the incident. In addition, extensive use of *From Silence to Memory: Revelations of the AHPN*, will aid the user in understanding these recordkeeping structures and document types. *Novedades* are listed as being of particular use in investigations related to human rights abuses, in addition to eleven other document types,

several of which contain their own series within both the General Directorate and the geographic departments.¹⁴⁶

Although the time spent perusing the Digital Archive itself may not be shortened through these tactics, and users cannot expect “immediate or exhaustive results like in a Google search,”¹⁴⁷ spending sufficient time examining external sources and obtaining necessary education to engage with the archive can make searching a less daunting task. The Digital Archive is not capable of guiding users through an iterative process and lead them step by step to the context needed to inform their search such as the documental flow of the National Police, or a list of Departments or superiors responsible for certain activities. Instead, these operational and administrative contexts are available through numerous external resources, but it is incumbent upon the user to seek them out and use them to inform a search. The accessibility of the Digital Archive, while challenging, is less a reflection of the Digital Archive itself and more a reflection of the expectations of its users.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “About AHPN.”

CONCLUSION: THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHIVES

PROVIDING ACCESS, IN CONTEXT

Two of the primary ethical concerns for archivists are to maintain the context of collections so that the records can serve as evidence, and to facilitate subsequent access to these primary source materials.¹⁴⁸ However, the growth in digital repositories and a user expectation for ‘easy access’ means that at times these two goals appear diametrically opposed.¹⁴⁹ Yet, ultimately, provenance-based collections provide as much opportunity as they do difficulty—by understanding the structures and functions of an organization, reference archivists are able to move into and out of the archive when searching for relevant documentation, without necessitating the breaking of archival bond.

The Guatemalan National Police Archive’s decision to maintain provenance, original order, and respect des fonds in the processing of the vast documentation of the National Police has been borne from the need to contextualize and understand the role of the police in Guatemala’s history of armed conflict, violence, and genocide. Preserving the functions and structures of the National Police and the internal and external forces that shaped their world provides both researching archivists and users a framework for engaging with the archive. By examining how archivists understand the operational and administrative structures of the National Police, the process of searching itself becomes a meaningful tool for understanding the value of context as it relates to human rights archives. These materials rely on archival context, and given their delicate and challenging subject matter, they require more context than most. It is only through the replication of the National Police’s structures that it can be fully and effectively interrogated and understood—the archive itself is more than an accumulation of

¹⁴⁸ Randall C. Jimerson, “Ethical Concerns for Archivists,” *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (February 2006): 87–92, doi:10.1525/tph.2006.28.1.87.

¹⁴⁹ Chowdhury, “From Digital Libraries to Digital Preservation Research.”

documents, it is the only historical representation of the National Police; its structures, functions, and actions.

Digital Access and the ‘Price of Admission’

The growth of access to digitized archival materials and primary sources exacerbates the aforementioned ethical dilemma of human rights archives. Essentially, what gets lost within the digital realm that poses a threat to the context of human rights archives? While it is possible to preserve the intellectual order and provenance of archives, as is the case with the Digital Archive of the Guatemalan National Police, this overload of information can serve to dissuade users from engaging with the digital archive. Yet given the distance between the user and the Digital archive, at times ontologically, and frequently geographically, requiring the user to familiarize themselves with the structure of the archive is not only a necessity to maintain the integrity of the collection, it is a clear political choice to preserve the context of a collection in the face of a world that attempts to sanitize the archive to promote access.¹⁵⁰ When archives contain lived experiences and vast historical traumas, it may not be a true impediment to expect the user to familiarize themselves with the archive. Out of respect for the archive itself and those whose lives it has affected, learning the structure and function of the archive may just be the price of admission in accessing digital human rights records.

FURTHER AVENUES FOR RESEARCH

This exploration into reference archivist’s use of archival context to locate documents is but one aspect of the issues surrounding access to archival collections. Once the documents pass from archivist to user, there remains additional interpretation and understanding on the user’s part, and additional conversations between archivist and user. Future explorations into understanding archival context beyond arrangement and into access should examine how users of the AHPN make sense of the documents they

¹⁵⁰ Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 131–41, doi:10.1007/BF02435644.

receive, whether they receive closure from the documents, and the ethical and emotional aspects of locating information within the archive]. Through further qualitative approaches and conversations with users, archivists can pinpoint how accessing documents of human rights abuses impact users, and examine the preservation of historical memory amongst generations of those impacted by violence. Within the AHPN, many of the abuses are recent enough to be remembered first hand—additional scholarship within this arena can speak more directly to the capacity of archives such as the AHPN to provide emotional support in societies still recovering from decades of violence.

The Guatemalan National Police Archive currently resides at intersections of archival context, historical memory, and human rights. Future scholarship within the archive can take varied approaches in understanding how trauma intersects with accessing documents of human rights abuses. Vicarious trauma, where workers within the realm of human rights experience trauma or traumatic symptoms as a result of their empathetic engagement with survivors of human rights abuses,¹⁵¹ remains a neglected area within the lived experiences of archivists and those working to preserve historical memory of human rights violations. Additionally, qualitative reflections on the archival profession, specifically when examining human rights archiving, remain limited, but may offer additional pathways into examining both historical trauma and the archival profession. The Guatemalan National Police Archive remains a vital site for exploration into each of these facets of human rights archives and how the daily work of archivists continues to examine and interrogate history.

¹⁵¹ Pilar Hernandez-Wolfe et al., “Vicarious Resilience, Vicarious Trauma, and Awareness of Equity in Trauma Work,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 55, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 153–72, doi:10.1177/0022167814534322.

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