Personal Collections and Personal Information Management in the Family Context

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Abstract

People who produce something notable for future generations during their lives often have collections of documents and artifacts with potential cultural heritage value, but such collections can be lost forever just as easily as preserved and enjoyed by future generations. This paper reports on five case studies of significant individuals' collections to explore how such individuals and their families value and manage their collections, the decisions they make and challenges they face in doing so, and what effects these and other challenges may have on the transference of their collections to preservation institutions. We found that family bonds play a significant role when deciding what to do with a collection, as does having the awareness, skills, and support to organize collections and negotiate with libraries, archives, and museums. Participants viewed personal collections as proof of their professional identities and as having valuable storytelling potential. However, the locus of responsibility for safeguarding personal collections of significant individuals remains unclear. The paper outlines how to more effectively organize personal collections and protect them from being lost and contributes to closing a knowledge gap at the intersection of several areas of information science, namely information behavior, personal information management, and cultural heritage management.

Introduction

People of cultural significance sometimes keep extensive personal collections that attest to their life's work and their influence on society and even capture the social and political milieu of their time. Sometimes such collections are donated to organizations that preserve and make those

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collections accessible to others, like national memory or heritage institutions, but collections may also, through various means, be lost or otherwise rendered inaccessible (e.g., never donated, donated but without sufficient information to make them accessible, etc.). In a broad research project, the authors have begun investigating both successful cases of collection transfer and reuse and the causes, factors, and potential solutions of collections that are lost or become inaccessible, or what one may call *hidden heritage*. As one step toward our greater research goals, this paper explores issues around managing information in personal collections with an emphasis on family contexts (e.g., familial information, family legacies, family collections, etc.).

One might reasonably ask why an individual, significant or otherwise, would bother organizing and preserving documents and artifacts collected during their life. The answer to this question lies in the value that such collections can have for individuals, their families, and society more broadly. This value can be informative and evidential, containing and validating information about events in a person's life, but also emotional, opening channels for communication and connection or remembrance. The discussion of the societal value of preservation has a long history, with some (Smith 2007) arguing that preservation has short- and long-term benefits for society over and above the sum of the value of content preserved. We can look at the value of family collections through the same lens. For many people, personal collections and the value they carry will remain in the boundaries of family context. But some people's collections may be of wider interest. These are the people whose actions during their lives produced something relevant or notable for future generations, and whose collections of papers and artifacts (in physical and/or digital format) have direct or indirect cultural heritage value. In this study, they are referred to as significant individuals. Notwithstanding their value, the collections of individuals (significant or otherwise) are often endangered due to poor storage, media obsolescence, a lack of documentation, confusion over intellectual property, a lack of awareness or planning, and other challenges (Digital Preservation Coalition 2019). This paper presents select findings from our broader research project (Hidden Heritage 2019). In this paper, we focus specifically on the links between personal information management (PIM) practices and the content and value of personal collections in the family context.

Literature Review

The management of significant individuals' personal collections and the impact of that management on the potential heritage value of those collections is a complex problem that must take into account a range of issues that potentially evolve over decades, including personal collections in various digital and physical formats; the management of such collections;

the role of collections in the information legacies of individuals and their families; the heritage value of those collections; their precarious transfer to heritage institutions; and their subsequent access, reuse, and management. We briefly review these aspects and their related research and summarize the respective knowledge gaps.

Personal and Family Collections as Information Legacies

People keep personal collections in physical and digital formats to track and meet the needs of their personal, familial, and professional circumstances, or simply for personal enjoyment or fulfilment. A person may, for example, maintain a collection of documents related to their job as a teacher or writer (Diekema and Olsen 2014; Douglas 2015), a collection of recipes for cooking as a hobby (Hartel 2010), digital travel photos accumulated over years (Cunningham and Masoodian 2007), fine art for enjoyment or preservation (Post 2017a), or computer files pertaining to family finances (Jones et al. 2017). An individual may also maintain a collection that is of or about their cultural community, such as keeping archival records and memoirs of difficult times to preserve precarious group memory (Bastian 2003; Halilovich 2016). Such collections are personal insofar as they are owned and/or managed by an individual (Jones et al. 2017), but are also personal in deeper and subtler ways. Notably, they represent an individual's interests and values, provide evidence of their life and activities, can contain valuable belongings and reflect proud achievements, and provide the owner with an opportunity to curate the evidence of their life (Cushing 2013). At this level, such collections comprise personal information *legacies* (Jones et al. 2016), which are potentially valuable but also rather difficult to study as they evolve over large periods of time and the value of a legacy isn't always clear until years after (Dinneen, Odoni, and Julien 2016). Indeed, while the existence of practical guides to manage such legacies (Condron 2017; Redwine and Digital Preservation Coalition 2015) demonstrates that people are creating and managing such legacies, scholarly research has yet to fully reflect their importance.

Although individuals' collections are highly personal, their management is also inherently social and societal as collections tend to be connected to institutions beyond the home (McKenzie and Davies 2012), even when they are not comanaged (e.g., connected to one's workplace, even if the collection is not stored there; Thomson 2010), and are often subject to social and professional influences of interested parties within and outside the home (Douglas 2015). Thus, and perhaps unsurprisingly, people also keep collections relating to their family, whether managed by one individual or multiple family members.

Family collections are made of possessions and records that are typically viewed as deeply sentimental and valuable (Kirk and Sellen 2010) for their role in depicting family history and identity (Woodham et al.

2017), providing connection to childhood memories (Stevens et al. 2003), deceased relatives, family estates, and previously inhabited lands (Mathias, Evans, and Owen 2019) and even contributing to the identity formation of individual living family members (Gloyn et al. 2018). Family archives are thus often perceived as valuable heirlooms and persist across generations (Ketelaar 2009), although the value of the physical portions of such collections is sometimes more readily apparent (i.e., the value of digital personal collections can be more difficult to establish; Petrelli and Whittaker 2010).

Despite their sentimental and practical value, both family and personal collections (and individual items/records) are critically endangered due to being stored on an obsolete medium or in inappropriate physical conditions, not having suitable metadata to document the context, or lacking clear understanding of copyright issues (Digital Preservation Coalition 2019). Such problems are compounded when collections change ownership, for example during inheritance, potentially causing further emotional and practical challenges in managing the collections. Other issues that may arise include an unwillingness to review an inherited collection if it causes painful memories, an inability to make sense of large collections of inherited digital data (Dinneen and Krtalić 2020), or anxiety about seeing content not intended for them. All of these may result in a lack of will and/or mental fortitude to look at, preserve, or manage the collection (Odom, Banks, and Kirk 2010). There are also conceptual issues surrounding such collections. What is considered public or private in a family collection may not always be clear to the collection's creator or inheritor, for example (Szapor 2012), and it is not clear *when* people think about or decide to start organizing or annotating (or not) their collection, nor what events may prompt such activity.

The existence of practical guides to managing one's "digital afterlife" (Carroll and Romano 2010) suggests there is widespread acknowledgment that securing, maintaining, and keeping an information legacy accessible after death is not straightforward. Although some of the issues discussed above are common to other kinds of collections, and information research and information institutions such as libraries, museums, and archives have put considerable effort into addressing them (Cloonan 2015; Corrado and Sandy 2017; Oliver and Harvey 2016), further understanding of the context, challenges, and management of personal collections is needed to produce more targeted tools, techniques, recommendations, and interventions (Jones et al. 2017).

The collections of significant individuals are highly personal and closely connected to their owners' (and families') identity, not only because they are deeply intimate, but because they are representations of their owners' life's work. Despite their importance in this regard, little is known about the information behavior, including the collection management behavior, of significant individuals. Writers are, for example, one such category of significant individuals. Studies have found that writers often have anxieties about managing digital collections and perhaps consequently exhibit "benign neglect" toward their collections, resulting in collections that are "poorly managed, highly distributed, and unsystematically labelled" (Becker and Nogues 2012, 482). The preservation of the context of a collection and a writer's and artist's work is as important as preserving the work itself (Mičunović, Marčetić, and Krtalić 2016), and there is currently emphasis on the need to develop a collaborative framework to preserve such collections (Cianci 2017; Post 2017a, 2017b; Rinehart and Ippolito 2014).

Importance of Personal Information Legacies to GLAMR

Personal legacies, and the individual and family collections that compose them, are important for cultural heritage and society more broadly (Smith 2007), and their management has implications for galleries, libraries, archives, museums, and records keeping units (GLAMR). The presence of personal legacies in cultural institutions serves as an artifact of expression for works that shaped, either overtly or subtly, the shared experience and identity of a nation or a group within a nation (Feinberg et al. 2012; McKemmish 1996). As Feinberg (2011, 588) phrases it, "Through their composition, arrangement and description, [such] collections . . . tell a form of story." Personal and family records are important to the state and nation because the individual histories they communicate are a part of the collective history and can become a codified part of collective memory through inclusion in a repository (Society of American Archivists 2013). Enabling individuals and families to contribute directly to collective memory also arguably contributes to a more democratic writing of history (Gloyn et al. 2018). It is thus within the mandate and general responsibility of GLAMR institutions to keep records of significant individuals, the related cultural heritage, and their context and role in society by preserving and providing access to their collections.

Individuals can donate parts of their collections to community archives (Roeschley and Kim 2019), which may be managed by national memory institutions or even public libraries (Copeland 2015). Public libraries can also help individuals to manage their collections (Copeland and Barreau 2011) and encourage their involvement in the management of community archives (Hives 1994). However, even though GLAMR institutions have been hosting and organizing personal legacy collections for centuries, some of the challenges in organizing, describing, and preserving personal collections persist and are amplified in the digital environment. The management and presentation of such collections must be done carefully, for example, because "principles of selection, organization, and description produce an interpretive frame that shapes the meaning of each collection, [and] such effects may run counter to longstanding goals and values" of the institution or the collection creator(s) (Feinberg 2011). Currently, we lack in-depth understanding of collection building by significant individuals (i.e., heritage amateurs; Roued-Cunliffe 2017), which could be addressed through a comparison of their varying practices and perspectives, bringing together concepts and perspectives from several areas of information science and the GLAMR sector, including cultural heritage management, PIM, and information behavior.

The professional archivist literature highlights some of the tensions between professional and personal practices of organizing information, although Hobbs (2001, 126) suggests that "by seeking to reflect the character and interiority of individuals within archives, archivists will better represent the creator not just as a social agent, but as the creative individual forging his or her own life through time." Professional practice can thus be enhanced by identifying the PIM needs of users and provide appropriate and tailored services to meet those needs (Lush 2014).

Transferring Significant Individuals' Collections to Heritage Institutions/Repositories

Issues in managing personal collections begin with the individual at the start of the collection. In the digital domain, abundant, affordable storage and the tendency to keep everything can result in collections that may be so large that managing, retrieving, or annotating them becomes unappealing to the owner, which can result in valuable collections being unusable for future owners or lost altogether (Dinneen, Julien, and Frissen 2019; Vitale, Janzen, and McGrenere 2018; Whittaker 2013). This can also happen with paper collections, which tend to be retained and valued regardless of their ongoing use (Whittaker and Hirshberg 2001). As collections persist across time (and generations), owners can lose familiarity with them or forget about them entirely (Narayan and Olsson 2013).

Further issues may arise in transferring significant individuals' collections through family members and to heritage institutions. To start, the highly personal and interconnected nature of personal collections is difficult to fully capture in their original order (Meehan 2010). This problem of capture is compounded by loss of overview individuals had of their collection when the collection is inherited by family members: collections and their stories tend to become vague, and many uncertainties can result in benign neglect of the collection. Technology too can complicate collection management across time: by introducing new management tools (digital and physical), related information items become fragmented (Capra, Vardell, and Brennan 2014) and metadata may be lost. Thus, successful and sustainable collaboration relies on the enhanced archival awareness of the creators and the guidance of a professional archival institution and related public organizations (Zhou, Wen, and Dai 2020).

Additional potential issues include challenges imposed by families and institutions dealing with sensitive information and intellectual property in collections; further research is needed to learn how such issues affect the transfer of personal collections to heritage institutions and the state that they arrive in.

Summary

Given the multiple stakeholders and perspectives involved, and the deeply personal and affective nature of personal collections and their management, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of the boundaries between individual management, institutional curation, and the general experience of a collection or legacy are nuanced, and thus the entire phenomenon, from individuals' experiences to the consequent family and institutional responses, is not yet well understood (Feinberg et al. 2012). The risk emerging from the challenges discussed above, and the lack of understanding of them, is that valuable collections do not make it to GLAMR sector institutions in a (re)usable state or at all, in other words remaining as *hidden heritage:* unpreserved, potentially lost to posterity, and unrepresented in national memory. This paper therefore takes some initial steps toward understanding the factors that influence the shape and transfer of collections by exploring how significant individuals and their families value and manage personal collections and what impacts their decisions have on family members when collections change hands within families or are transferred to the GLAMR sector.

Methodology

Research Objectives and Questions

This paper presents select findings from the larger project, "Hidden Heritage: Preserving, Presenting, and Reusing Personal Collections." To examine the familial factors in personal collections, our objectives were to explore how significant individuals and their families manage personal information and collections and the issues they face in that process. The paper is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the attitudes of significant individuals and their families regarding the value of their personal collections?
RQ2: How is information from personal collections of significant individuals organized, preserved, described, presented, and shared among family members?
RQ3a: What challenges do family members of deceased significant individuals deal with when managing inherited personal collections?
RQ3b: What issues, decisions, or factors might affect the transfer of collections to the GLAMR sector?

In accordance with our university's values of (1) fostering a reciprocal relationship between the researchers and the participants where both teach and learn from each other (*Akoranga*) and (2) working toward joint guardianship of the knowledge creation process (*Kaitiakitanga*), additional objectives of this research were to raise awareness among participants about the importance of preserving personal and family collections and help participants build skills to organize and preserve their own collections and negotiate more successfully with libraries, archives, and museums.

Methods and Sample

This study is a descriptive, exploratory study using qualitative methods to investigate people's experiences of managing personal collections. To answer the research questions, we analyzed data collected during case studies of the personal collections of individuals significant in New Zealand, either with the individuals themselves or with family members who had inherited the collections. This approach enabled us to collect data about how both the individuals and their families managed such collections. Each participant was treated as one case study. Data were collected from January 2019 to February 2020, first through semistructured interviews and follow-up emails and, for three participants, through ongoing consultation about collection management, which entailed additional interviews and observation of those participants during collection management activities.

The initial interviews lasted approximately an hour and a half and were structured by three groups of questions aligned with our research questions: attitudes about the value of the collection (RQ1), PIM practices (RQ2), and challenges faced in the process of organizing a collection (RQ3a, b). During the first group of questions, participants were asked to introduce themselves, describe the content of their collection and discuss if/how their life and work is reflected in it, and consider what importance and value that content might have for them, their family members, and society. During the second set of questions, participants were asked to describe details of their organization and preservation practices (e.g., filing, naming, and annotating paper and digital documents) as well as disaster preparedness, access and security, sharing with family members, and so on. If at any point participants indicated having contacted information institutions for advice, they were prompted to describe details of that experience. For the final set of questions, participants were asked to describe any issues or challenges they faced in the management processes, such as emotional barriers and legal uncertainties.

Participants were then encouraged to take an active role in the research process by working on organizing their collections and sending any additional thoughts via email to the researchers for further discussion in follow-up interviews. After the initial interviews, if participants wanted advice on how to organize, describe, digitize, preserve, cull or share their collection, we worked with them, spending up to thirty hours with them, and during that time we answered any questions they had and made observation notes about their comments and actions. We did not make any decisions on the participants' behalf, but we offered advice on how to proceed and where to look for more information in case of any uncertainties.

Invitation to participate in our research was distributed along the communication channels provided by several New Zealand authors' and artists' associations. Interested participants then contacted us to express their interest in the research project, and we met to determine if potential participants met the study inclusion criteria: they or their family member are significant individuals and have some relevant collection (e.g., documents and/or artifacts). While there is no consensus on what makes an individual *significant,* we required that participants be recognized either publicly (e.g., for their major role in a well-known and long-lasting nongovernmental organization) or by a relevant association as a notable member of their respective field. Given the breadth of the relevant phenomena (e.g., personal collections) and possibility for individuals of any background to be significant (culturally or otherwise), and barring extant literature about differences in such individuals' collections, we did not implement specific demographic criteria.

Two significant individuals and three family members of such individuals with appropriate collections contacted us, resulting in five relevant cases for study, covering the collections of an eminent peace activist, a well-known sculptor, two well-known authors, and a respected psychiatrist for various nongovernmental organizations. Their collections contained mostly physical materials such as correspondences, various reports, books, journals, photographs, newspaper clippings, artwork, raw art material, textiles, VCR video recordings, tape cassettes in various formats, and, in some cases, technology to play recordings. The exact scale of each collection is unclear as only one participant who invested efforts into indexing the collection could estimate the scale of their collection, but collections were all substantial enough to likely require management decisions, challenges, and so on. The digital part of each collection was relatively minimal compared to the physical and contained mostly emails, text documents, and digital photographs. Two cases involved first interviews and several follow-up emails, while the remaining three cases involved consultation and therefore additional interviews and observations. Table 1 summarizes the properties of the five cases and the data collection steps.

Ethical review and approval of the study was obtained (HEC 27173) from the researchers' institution prior to data collection, and data were kept confidential and anonymized during collection and analysis.

Table 1. Summary of five case studies, participant and collection profiles, and data collection methods

Case	Participant, collection, and donation attributes	Data collection entailed
P1	Female, age 50–60 Daughter of eminent peace activist Parts of the collection given to GLAMR Collection: paper documents (records, reports, correspondence), notebooks/diaries, emails, books, photographs, video and audio recordings, newspaper clippings, textile	Interview and follow-up emails Consultation, observation, one additional interview
P2	Female, age 55–65 Daughter of a writer, herself a writer, exploring her mother's history Parts of the collection given to GLAMR Collection: letters, postcards, photographs, books, manuscripts, records, emails, notebooks/diaries, newspaper clippings, copies of archival records	Interview and follow-up emails Consultation, observation, one additional interview
P3	Female, age 80–90 Psychiatrist Collection donated to the New Zealand National Library as a legacy collection Collection: paper documents (records, reports, correspondence), emails, notebooks, books, photographs, video and audio recordings, newspaper clippings, textile	Interview and follow-up emails Consultation, observation, two additional interviews
P4	Male, age 65–75 Sculptor Parts of the collection given to GLAMR Collection: artwork, art material (stone), books, photographs, paper documents (records), notebooks/diaries, exhibition catalogues, newspaper clippings	Interview and follow-up emails
P5	Female, age 65–75 Daughter of a known bookseller and author Parts of the collection given to GLAMR Collection: books, photographs, artwork, textile, paper documents (records), notebooks/diaries, newspaper clippings	Interview and follow-up emails

Data Analysis

The interviews were manually transcribed and interpreted for trends relevant to the research questions above (Leedy and Ormrod 2015), and thematic analysis was undertaken to identify notable similarities and differences among cases (Braun and Clarke 2006). To support this process all authors identified and agreed upon interrelated themes from the data pertinent to each research question, using quotations to support thematic categories (Leedy and Ormrod 2015). This was an iterative process. We went through several rounds of analyzing and integrating supporting data from observation notes and email messages. Email conversations and observation notes were examined and analyzed to identify content relevant to the research questions, either a new theme or additional elaboration of something already identified in the interviews. Data from each collection method were thus combined and analyzed together and are presented together in the results. Because the work was exploratory, the overall observation and analysis process is best described as "a constant, ongoing element of the research process; it begins during the interview, and each time you reflect on what you hear and ask a follow-up question you will have engaged in initial analysis" (Pickard 2013, 202).

Results

In this section we present collated data from interviews, observation notes, and email correspondence grouped under the four research questions, which also correspond to the interview question groupings.

RQ1: Attitudes of Significant Individuals and Families toward the Value of Their Collections

The first set of questions aimed at exploring participants' attitudes about the value of their (or their family member's) collection. Participants were prompted to think about the value in terms of how their life and work is represented in the collection and to reflect why, how, and for whom their collections are important. After sharing their perceptions of the collection as a whole, they were asked to reflect on particular aspects of their work/achievements that should be kept for the future.

In all five case studies, participants considered their collections relevant and valuable and therefore expressed positive attitudes toward preservation beyond family context and the availability of parts of the collections to the public. However, the exact value and its nature was initially somewhat hard for participants to explain. Through conversations we identified three main themes in relation to the recognition of the significance of participants' personal collections: sociopolitical value of the collections, evidential value of collections as records, and collections as representation of their life and personality.

Sociopolitical Value of the Collections. When explaining the value of her mother's collection, P1 valued it as evidence of her important national and international accomplishments in peace activism and fighting for rights of women and children. P1 noted that parts of the collection contain historical data about various organizations her mother was involved with, but she also pointed out that the collection as a whole is a representation of her mother's life achievements and mirrors the time, place, and personal views of the relevant events. This value was evident to all family members involved in organizing the collection, but the interest in the collection from well-known nongovernmental organizations made the family "very, very aware of the potential treasure trove that there was" (P1). During the last years of her life, P1's mother indicated the value of some items to be kept, and that was also a motivating factor that raised awareness in the family of the potential social and political value of the collection.

P2, being a significant individual herself, also expressed recognition of the value of the collection to her as a writer and of its sociopolitical value, especially in relation to women's rights:

> Speaking about my own personal collection of articles and things that I've archived about my own writing, and also about my mother's life which I've been writing about for the past two years, . . . I guess the most important thing is a political element that these are about women first of all. The documents related to my mother [are] about her life as a woman who . . . was situated in Europe at many interesting points of history during the 1930s, and also my own work as a woman, as a female writer.

P2 added, "I feel that my work is important because it's showing younger women also that you can do it as a woman" and explained that she kept items in her collection because of their symbolic social value, for example, to document pay inequality between men and women. "I'd photocopied some of the cheques like the first time I received a cheque from a funding grant from Creative New Zealand as these are really important things to me as a writer and as a woman who wasn't receiving as much money as men" (P2).

Collections as Records. The perceived value of a collection also depends on how it is used. Documents and items in personal collections serve as records for individual purposes but also as records for society. P2 explains this notion:

> Writers do often go back to look at past material. For instance, there was a short story I wrote . . . and I later was asked to adapt that into a play script, which I did successfully, and as a theatre commissioning. . . . I think that is probably one of the main reasons writers keep their manuscripts, because they're always thinking, you know, I might be able to do something else here. I always say to people that I mentor: never throw anything away. . . . It is also just a record and archive for me but as for it being of [or] having value for society, I am not so sure.

P4, whose collection contains his artworks and related documentation about his life as an artist, made a similar point about using the collection as an aid to memory:

> Every work that I've ever made is documented. . . . If I hadn't done it, I wouldn't have a clue what I'd made. . . . As the years have gone on, I've kept better and better notes. In the early days, . . . didn't even date the pages so it's all over the place. So, you know it will be a drawing, but it won't say when it was actually done or anything like that.

While initially created as records for personal purposes, P4 recognizes that records of his own work have significance for art history, "but there would need to be a way to make sense out of not necessarily well-organized collection."

Due to the nature of her work as a psychiatrist, and having functions in various professional and nongovernmental organizations, P3 recognizes that her collection contains many documents that are records of activities and events that may not have been kept elsewhere. She used them as records of her personal activities and found her documents invaluable when reusing for networking purposes. However, the reason for keeping them was not necessarily immediate awareness that she might reuse them in the future. P3 explained that she kept everything because she didn't know for how long to keep the records. For that reason, "nothing got thrown away."

However, purpose and value that make sense to an owner of a collection do not necessarily make the same sense to a family member who inherits the collections. Since many of her documents were historical records of sociopolitical reforms, P3 explained how her family members expressed frustration with dealing with a large volume of unorganized materials, especially those that would need to be classified as containing confidential materials: "My daughter said 'Mum, if we don't know what's there, we don't know what's confidential, we don't know anything.' She said, 'I'm sorry, but it'll have to go up in smoke with you.'"

Collections as a Representation of Life and Personality. Significant individuals and their family members recognized not just the evidential value of their work and achievements, but also the implicit value of personal collections as representations of their life and personality.

P1 indicated this issue saying that the collection is crucial "if somebody wanted to examine Mother as a person and as a woman of the twentieth and, even into the twenty-first century." Access to the collection would therefore be indispensable for any creative outputs such as writing memoirs or a biography.

The personality of a collection's owner is also reflected in how a collection is organized. P5 elaborated on the value of her mother's collection in its entirety explaining that the value of the collection of someone who was a children's writer, literacy expert, and children's bookshop owner was evident because it contained rich material of historical value:

> The main house was just chocka full of everything, from letters, from the 1930s, and I knew there was a lot of material through the war years, and then her writing and all of her lecture notes, and her books right from the start. The first proof copies and galley copies . . . in every form.

However, P5 also raised a point that organization practices were so embedded in her mother's collection that disturbing initial order meant bringing chaos into what seemed initially like an overwhelming but well-organized collection. "She organized her stuff well. . . . She kept everything. . . . It was all in brown . . . paper envelopes or folders. She bought plastic bins and . . . it was just everywhere, and it was just so much. . . . For, oh fifty years I suppose" (P5).

While in all the case studies collections were recognized as significant beyond the family context, participants struggled with taking actions that would make the value explicit, such as deciding what to keep and what to throw away, organizing and describing collection items, storing in appropriate preservation conditions, digitizing, presenting, sharing with others and telling a story, and finally communicating with the GLAMR sector about the potential transfer of parts of collections. We explain these actions next.

RQ2: Management Practices and Implications for Family

The second set of questions aimed to assess how information from personal collections of significant individuals is organized, described, preserved, presented, and shared among family members.

Organization and Preservation Practices of Physical and Digital Material in Personal Collections. All collections in the cases studied were primarily physical, and not much attention was given to the digital aspect even when it existed. Collections were organized by the owners following patterns of their work (e.g., functional filing based mainly on activities, events, and timelines) but also showing patterns affected by personality (e.g., those participants who described themselves as hoarders tended to keep everything just in case).

In most cases, collections were kept in people's homes in stable humidity and temperature supporting preventive preservation of personal collections. Participants did not give much attention to preservation plans in case of disaster, even though they were aware that living in New Zealand meant disasters such as earthquakes are possible.

Digital documents such as emails, reports, minutes of meetings, invitations to events, and others were often printed out and added to the physical collection. Both P1 and P3 said that the act of printing out something gave relevance to the digital document. Filing digital documents followed patterns similar to organizing paper collections: structure of the files follows activities and events in the person's work. Families who inherited collections prioritized organization of physical items over digital.

The type of material in the collection determined the owner's organization and preservation practices too. P4 expressed doubts regarding the feasibility of preserving a personal collection of arts due to the amount of space taken by some of the objects of art in his collection:

> The notebooks are not a problem, and the photographs are not really a problem, they'll just go into . . . a museum, archive, but what happens to . . . quite a few big sculptures is another question entirely, so I don't know what will happen there.

However, when family members inherited collections, the original order and conditions in which collections had been kept were usually disrupted. When her mother died, P1 said they had to empty the house, and they put everything in boxes in no clear order. Often, inherited collections are left in inappropriate conditions such as attics and garages due to shortage of space or the urgency to empty the home of the deceased significant individual. Gifting parts of the collection to GLAMR organizations also means items are taken out of initial context, and if that context has not been documented with metadata, part of the informational and evidential value can be easily lost.

Faced with a vast number of physical items, participants who inherited collections considered the benefits of digitization but also expressed awareness and concerns about the longevity of digital documents. P1 explained,

> I was glad to have it digitized . . . and a major step was to actually get rid of the physical records. [Nevertheless] I do have some concerns about digital records in general, because I know the pace that technology moves that makes the technology of today redundant, obsolete, and [creates] the need for actually having [digital records] in a digital format that is updated.

Destroying and discarding material was deemed as an inevitable part of organization and preservation practices. Although all participants agreed that it was a necessary step to free up space and allow efforts to focus on the most important parts of the collections, participants also expressed awareness that by destroying material something valuable might be inadvertently lost.

P1, P3, and P5 dealt with materials considered to contain sensitive information, so they paid special attention to destruction methods for documents with confidential and private information when destroying or discarding material from personal collections. "I had to work out what was recyclable, just sort of papers, and what was sensitive and we hand ripped. . . . But we also took a number of boxes to the document destruction people" (P5).

Managing Sensitive Information. Organization practices include managing sensitive information in documents. Personal collections naturally contain very private information about an individual's life. This is, of course, one of the valuable aspects that gives insight into their significant work. However, families often do not wish to make such private information publicly available. This requires knowing what is in the collection and requires an investment of time in removing private information before the collection reaches the public domain. This point was raised in all the case studies.

P1 described debating with family members what should be visible to the public and identified challenges of inheriting a collection and then determining what should be moved from the private to the public: "I sort of pulled back a bit from giving things to the National Library because (a) they already had some, and (b) there was still that [debate], well, . . . did we actually want that to go into the public record?"

Presenting and Sharing Information about Documents and Items from Personal Collections with Other Family Members. Organizing a collection is also an opportunity to share family history and stories among family members, and the participants confirmed the value that items in personal collections have as communication and connection channels. P1 explained, "I would share some of the things that popped up and, and say . . . did you know that she was involved in that?, and there would be a family story about it."

All participants on multiple occasions expressed the need to find a creative way to tell a story about their life and work. P2 and P4, being active in creative sectors themselves, had a better understanding of how to use items from personal collections for artistic purposes. Both significant individuals and family members with inherited collections expressed a desire to create a webpage or have someone write and publish a biography or memoir. "This way, it would be my complete story, not just fragments of it in other collections," explained P4.

P1, P2, and P5 raised some of the challenges of owning original artifacts by family members and acknowledged it as a potential point of dispute between siblings. In some cases, such dispute was around wanting to own an original (physical) item rather than a copy. In other cases, dispute resulted from a worry about a family member not wanting to share or care for an item from the collection. P2 described a situation where she was worried that her sister was not taking good care of some of the valuable letters in her possession:

> My eldest sister actually has my mothers' letters. My eldest sister is the person that my mother told the most to about this period of her life and I think this is why my sister wants to hold on to the letters. . . . I felt a bit worried about how she's keeping them. She's also getting older and I noticed that sometimes she doesn't quite . . . remember what she's got there. I was a bit worried about that too. . . . So she's allowed me to photocopy all the letters and [I] transcribed them.

P2 also raised a question whether reformatted documents are of interest to GLAMR: "I would be interested in knowing . . . whether any place would be interested in transcribed letters or/and just the copies."

From the above description of management practices, several identified implications prompted a further discussion with family members who have inherited collections about the challenges they faced.

RQ3a: Challenges in Dealing with Inherited Collections from Family Members Who Were Significant Individuals

The third set of questions aimed at identifying potential challenges and obstacles participants encountered with managing personal collections (e.g., those caused by the task itself, by decisions made previously, etc.). Predominant were emotional issues that the participants had to face while handling inherited collections, followed by awareness of the intellectual property issues and perceived gaps in information management skills.

Emotional Issues Faced during Organization and Preservation and Its Effect on Practices. Emotions had a significant impact on how people dealt with collections, both their own and inherited. Significant individuals themselves confirmed that they had experienced anxiety when thinking about life and death and what will happen to their collections after they die. Participants who had inherited collections explained a range of emotions that they had felt and discussed how those emotions affected the way they handled collections.

The first thing participants faced was the pressure of deciding what to do with a big physical collection usually combined with the urgency to empty a deceased person's house. When asked about what the most emotionally challenging factor for her was, P1 said,

> Throwing things out. That process of destroying things that might tell a story in themselves, and then at the end of the process throwing out the hard copy. Into the recycling. That was quite hard, and it felt like, alright there's no coming back from this. That might have been important and now it's gone. That was really hard. . . . I'm determined that people should know that they should do that themselves, because it's very, very hard to do it for somebody else. . . . [I was] somewhat annoyed that I was having to make those decisions.

P5 echoes relief when organizations from the GLAMR sector expressed interest in her mother's collection:

> I was enormously relieved, and I was relieved they took so much stuff. Because, for example, some of her books were first galley proofs that came through with her notations in pencil, corrections and then there was the next form of it, and the next and the next and the bulk of it was just huge.

Emotional pressure also came from feeling obliged to take responsibility. Often it was one family member who took responsibility for dealing with the inherited collection. P5 described this process:

> I'm one of eight children, . . . there were seven of us and we're very close, and, at the beginning we all tried to sort of do it together, and, it just got impossibly difficult, and a few of my siblings were upset and emotional and didn't want to look at the house again . . . but somebody had to clear it out. . . . Everybody in the end would do anything I wanted, or help in any way, but ultimately they were happy to leave it up to me to work out what to do.

Stronger bonds between family members encouraged participants to consider more carefully and perhaps invest more efforts into handling the items in the collection of deceased family members, even when the emotions created a barrier to dealing with practical issues.

All participants pointed out that there is also a generational distance that makes it easier to deal with emotions. Those participants who dealt with parents' collections found it very difficult to look at deeply personal documents such as letters and diaries. However, the same object from a grandparent's collection did not have that same emotional burden but rather raised curiosity and stimulated further research into the collection.

Intellectual Property Issues in Organizing and Preserving Personal Collections. P3 and P4, both active in the creative sector and familiar with intellectual property, raised concerns about family members not being familiar with intellectual property issues arising from their work. They emphasized the importance of having such conversations before they die and leaving records to facilitate any potential restrictions. Similarly, P2 stated:

> But I guess [the] ultimate value is *the rights to the works* and because I've been getting older, I've been thinking about what I should do with that. I think that is pretty important because I don't think anybody in my family would be interested in what that meant. [They] don't understand much about what I do really. (emphasis added)

Participants discussed uncertainty around intellectual property issues in terms of presenting collections in digital format and making some of the works freely available.

Personal Information Management Skills. Participants raised their lack of (essentially) PIM skills and/or lacking confidence in those skills as significant challenges they faced in the process of collection management. Identified desired skills included, among others, classifying and indexing material, digitizing materials into the right format, adding metadata to describe documents, and redacting records with sensitive information. P5 explained the resulting trial and error approach that was necessary as well as its limitations:

> My brother . . . started scanning documents, and I thought, he's going to be here for the next ten years. I mean, . . . the house was just full of her records. [. . . So, he spent a day scanning and then backed out and just said, . . . he just couldn't do it.

However, participants acknowledged that the experience made them more aware of their own personal collection preservation practices. P1 explained that organizing her mother's collection made her

> very, very aware of those sorts of things, and to actually put them into a format that can be accessed by anybody, whoever I wanted to access those. And . . . when we moved house I thought about what do I actually need to keep, and did get rid of a lot of stuff, but kept a lot of stuff against the time of, future decision, I suppose.

RQ3b: Factors That May Affect Collection Transfer to the GLAMR Sector
Participants in all five cases had made contact with GLAMR organizations, had donated parts of their collections in the past, had plans to contact those organizations again, or were in the process of negotiating donations at the time of this study. The following issues were identified as potentially affecting the transfer of collections from personal to the collective sector: not fully understanding the expectations and processes of GLAM organizations and the risk of losing or damaging collections with heritage value while they are still in the possession of their creators and owners.

Understanding the Expectations and Processes of GLAMR Organizations. Lack of clear understanding of the expectations and processes of GLAMR organizations emerged from the data. P2 described communication with libraries as a challenging and often frustrating process to understand:

> I went to talk to [a person] at the library and I wanted to talk to her about my mother's letters and the other things relating to my mother that I had collected and I got the impression that she didn't think this material was very interesting or important. I'd actually taken some things with me that were things from my personal archive and she said she didn't want to take anything then and that I needed to actually fill in this form that's online which means that the curators then read the form because there are several different kinds of curators and they decide whether they want any of the material. And my impression was that [they] are getting a lot of people coming to them with paper material. Maybe they don't want that anymore because she asked if anything was digital and none of it was. But I went home and felt really upset and really frustrated. So, this was really when I started thinking about what to do about my own collection, personal collection, and my manuscripts . . . seemed like I'm not being considered as important enough.

One emphasized concern was about acquisition of the whole collection as opposed to in parts:

> It seemed to me that some of the material that I'd given the library previously had been filed in different ways, . . . and it that hadn't necessarily been filed under my name. . . . I felt like I wasn't sure about all of that and that nobody had ever actually talked to me about how they would be filed. (P2)

P1 explained how difficult it was for her to make the judgment about what was important or not important, stating she desired clear guidance from various organizations she wanted to donate material to, while P3 and P4 expressed concerns around losing the holistic context of collections without appropriate indexing and categorization:

> Well, I have had these discussions in the past, . . . they want to cherry pick, they don't just want to . . . take the whole lot thank you very much. So, . . . in a way it's an ongoing sort of . . . discussion that I need to be

> having. But what tends to happen, is . . . there's a lack of continuity in institutions. So, curators come, and they go, and there might be a curator who, you know, really likes my work and the next thing . . . they're not there any longer. So, you have to start the whole process over again so . . . it can be very frustrating and a waste of time. (P4)

There seemed to be a mismatch in expectations between what a donor should do prior to handing in the collection and what support an organization taking over the collection should provide. P3, whose collection had been donated as a whole to the National Library, had an agreement with the library that they will take everything if it is catalogued and indexed and the library offered some guidance in the process. However, when it came to taking over the collection and signing the agreement, P3 was very frustrated about standard library agreements and asked for her children to be contacted for approval in case the library decided to digitize or destroy parts of the collection. P3 also expressed concerns about dealing with sensitive information and patient confidentiality in her records once they are transferred to the library but was then informed by the library of their policies and protocols in such cases.

Participants showed awareness that collections needed to be in relatively good condition (e.g., not moldy, free of pests) to be acquired by a GLAMR organization. However, little awareness was given to the complexity of format and preservation issues in digital collections. Providing information about the context with metadata was seen as the primary responsibility of the owner, although there were uncertainties around how that information should be recorded before the transfer.

Some of the questions the participants asked while we observed their collection management actions were the following: What is the best format to store scanned letters? How to add my comments about what this correspondence actually means? Do I need to buy special boxes to keep my documents in? The library already has part of this collection; should I offer them the rest? If I give this item, what happens with rights?

Answers to questions such as these and action taken based on those answers affect the transfer of collections from personal to the collective sector.

Hidden Heritage Potential and the Risk of Loss. The above-mentioned issues all have potential implications when transferring collections between significant individuals and their families and GLAMR sector organizations. However, one more aspect emerged in interviews and observations, and that is the hidden heritage aspect.

If information about the personal collections of significant individuals stays solely with the family, there is a risk of losing access to potentially valuable information that sheds light on the life and work of significant individuals. Findings we presented earlier about the unintentional destruction confirm this point. Also, significant individuals are often involved in various professional and nongovernmental organizations and sometimes run their own businesses at the intersection of public and private sectors, which means their collection contains potentially valuable records.

All participants in our case studies had records in their collection belonging to various organizations that were suspected or known to no longer exist, some historic records being from almost eighty years ago, and all participants expressed uncertainty about what to do with such records. For example, P4 explained,

> There's half a room upstairs full of archives and all that stuff. I mean I've got all the archives for you know, forty, forty-five years of the society which I've been the president of for over twenty years. It's mostly from the early days, mostly paper files and they're in cardboard boxes and not very well organized . . . but you know, what do you do with it?

Discussion

Through our data we explored the perceptions, practices, and challenges our participants faced when managing their own or their family member's collections. Here we synthesize and discuss our findings along each research question.

RQ1: What Are the Attitudes of Significant Individuals and Their Families Regarding the Value of Their Personal Collections?

Significant individuals and their families recognized the value of their collections mainly in terms of their evidential value as records, but also for their broader potential social value. Their documents and artifacts serve as authentic evidence of individuals' identities and activities but are also valuable for depicting the social and political climates of a certain time and place (confirming long-term benefits of preservation as Smith [2007] described). Participants thus expressed positive attitudes toward the preservation and accessibility of their collections for future generations. In many cases, personal collections contain unique records of small organizations with which significant individuals were involved. This recordkeeping potential highlights the important role of personal records in creating societal/collective memory as described by McKemmish (1996) and Hobbs (2001). Personal collections are also perceived as rich sources of information for creative purposes of storytelling in various forms (confirming suggestions of Roeschley and Kim [2019] and Feinberg [2011]).

The following additional considerations also were found to influence how participants perceived value in their collection:

- Understanding reasons for creating and maintaining the collection (whether as a record of personal activities, a resource for reuse purposes, or a consequence of personality style, for example a "keeping everything" attitude)

- Knowing what broader evidence of time, place, and events the collection might contain and understanding the uniqueness of the collection
- Understanding the influence of the owner's personality on the organization of the collection
- Having conversations between family members about the content and value of the collections as well as the owner's wishes about the future of their collection

While it has been established in various contexts and formats that individuals value and see their identities reflected in their collections (see Jones et al. 2017 for many such examples), our results extend such an understanding by adding the above considerations and perceptions of families managing collections with significant cultural value. Prior works (Jones et al. 2016) have acknowledged the importance of studying personal information legacies, including those that extend across family members. The above results are, thus, an important first step toward understanding the *why* of such legacies (e.g., why keep and manage them) by providing detail about the value of the collections as perceived by both individuals and their family members.

Despite significant individuals' collections having potential social and cultural heritage value (both a priori and acknowledged by participants), what remains unclear is how collections managed by individuals less motivated than our participants are perceived and, for example, why the perceived value of those collections is insufficient to overcome the effort of required management activities and perceived (and actual) challenges.

RQ2: How Is Information from Personal Collections of Significant Individuals Organized, Preserved, Described, Presented, and Shared among Family Members?
Through observations and participant reports we found collections were, in brief, organized to match the individual's life, and passively preserved (as discussed above).

The findings suggest that organization practices mostly include classifying and filing according to the collection creator's life activities and events, and the influence of personality is therefore very visible in a collection's organization. As Woodham et al. (2017) noted, we are what we keep; people who tend to be very organized usually apply stricter organization structure in their documents and are, in the end, more visible to others through the collection, whereas those who tend to be less organized admit to a certain state of familiar chaos in their collections, and thus a clear picture (e.g., of the creator) is harder to ascertain from the collection. This was roughly reflected in the generally unorganized state of the collections we observed.

Regardless of organization, preservation is usually something done passively by simply keeping physical collections in stable conditions at home until they are inherited and moved to a storage environment that is less in the way but also less suitable for long-term preservation. Participants in the cases we studied did not give much attention to digital documents, and therefore digital preservation was also only minimally considered. This is perhaps attributable to those participants having spent at least two-thirds of their lives working in a predominantly paper-based environment but is no less problematic as digital materials also have the potential to be of great evidential and heritage value. Regardless of the format, it seems it would be useful to increase GLAMR and information science efforts toward the provision and promotion of educational resources about personal collection preservation (e.g., under the banners of PIM, personal archiving, or otherwise).

Although describing the context and the meaning of items in the collections (with family or otherwise) is seen as crucial for telling a story about one's life and work and sharing cultural potential in personal collections, there were no common or formal practices for doing so beyond oral tradition shared among family members and most often only for some of the items in a collection. This finding too indicates the potential for loss of historical and heritage content and value if significant individuals and their families do not hold and document their conversations about the collection's content, its value, and, equally importantly, the relevant preservation and management practices. This conversation needs to happen between individuals (and/or the families) and memory institutions too.

RQ3a: What Challenges Do Family Members of Deceased Significant Individuals Deal with When Managing Inherited Personal Collections?

Our results suggest that notable challenges to managing significant individuals' collections (inherited or otherwise) include the oftentimes unavoidable and strong emotions involved in the process of making difficult decisions, complications from intellectual property, and a lack of PIM skills.

Collections are seen as representations of a person's life and work. Going through the organization process, therefore, evokes strong memories and feelings, both for significant individuals thinking about end-of-life emotions and for family members of those deceased individuals. With inherited collections particularly, the responsibility to manage and preserve them, while often not knowing enough about their content and value, can complicate making decisions about their preservation and management, thus potentially producing frustration, anger, and resentment within families.

Another notable challenge individuals face is understanding and navigating the intellectual property domain: family members can be completely unaware of their rights as well as restrictions they might face in sharing parts of collections. Again, timely conversations between significant individuals, family members, and the GLAMR sector need to take place while people are alive in order to make family members aware of the rights and obligations, value and significance of the collections families might inherit or GLAMR organizations might receive.

While some prior works have examined the role of emotions in various information-seeking contexts (Lyons and Sokhey 2014), few works have explored affective factors (emotion or otherwise) in PIM (Whittaker and Massey 2020), fewer still for physical collections, and none in the context of family legacy collections. Although we have identified the role of some emotions in the collection management process, the long-term impact of these emotions requires further study if we are to understand and hopefully prevent losing the heritage value of such collections.

Our findings also illustrate the need for PIM skills in today's information society to better equip individuals to manage their collections, for their own and society's sake, generally. This is perhaps unsurprising as PIM skills are highly connected to general information literacy (Majid et al. 2013), but that our participants expressed needing such skills is a testament to the scale of the challenge entailed by managing personal collections. While some practical guides exist in the mainstream press as noted above, the GLAMR sector can actively contribute to the transmission of *research-based* guidance and skills to individuals (Fourie 2011). The benefit to this is twofold, as it would also be to an institution's advantage to receive collections in an adequately prepared condition, but how to best develop and promote this service is beyond the scope of the present study.

RQ3b: What Issues, Decisions, or Factors Might Affect the Transfer of Collections to the GLAMR Sector?

The heritage and social value of significant individuals' collections is retained only if collections are preserved, accessible, and reusable, which will primarily be achieved through the efforts of GLAMR institutions. We therefore sought to identify what in the collection management process might impede the successful transfer to the GLAMR sector. Our findings suggest that several issues can affect the successful transfer of a collection to the GLAMR sector, including the lack of clarity of and/or uncertainty around the expectations and processes of the GLAMR institutions, individuals' rights and responsibilities, and various issues around preservation, format, and metadata. Looking at themes across our findings, we find the following additional factors that influence individuals' decisions and approaches to the organization, preservation, and presentation of personal collections and could therefore impact the transfer of collections (or parts of it) to the GLAMR sector:

- Responsibility—Personality and awareness of the value of collections each play significant roles in taking the first step, but despite personal collections being so personal and valued, a notion of responsibility for

safeguarding personal collections of significant individuals remained unclear. When participants felt it was their responsibility to take care of their or their family member's collection, they were more open to investing efforts and finding necessary sources of information to help them through the process.
- Skills—Having experience or skills with processes such as indexing, scanning, adding metadata, and so on, or knowing where to get them, increases confidence and likelihood of successful collection management.
- Emotions—The process of organizing and preserving collections triggers a range of emotions in significant individuals and family members, including those caused by family bonds (Gloyn et al. 2018) and differing visions about the advantages of owning physical artifacts and documents rather than digital copies. PIM advice should therefore include advice on dealing with such stresses and emotions during the process.
- Benefits—Understanding personal rewards in the process and potential contributions to collective cultural heritage for societal benefit increases the likelihood of people investing efforts in the collection management.
- Support—Having available and appropriate support and guidance from GLAMR sector organizations helps to ensure the survival and discovery of collections with potential heritage value that otherwise might remain inaccessible, hidden, or lost. Guidance (e.g., practical guides, guidelines, or frameworks) from GLAMR institutions would be helpful for participants to assess the significance of their collections.

Based on the results, table 2 summarizes initial areas and recommendations to GLAMR institutions to offer support to individuals wishing to donate personal collections.

From these findings, and in consideration of collections' intended long-term contexts like family legacies or cultural heritage, we conclude that personal collections are precarious and their transfer to the GLAMR sector, where their value is most likely to be maintained in the long term, is highly susceptible to issues at the individual, familial, and institutional levels. The GLAMR sector should therefore have an interest in teaching PIM skills (Condron 2019; Fourie 2011). Our findings also suggest that such partnerships will help individual collections survive and be transferred to a GLAMR institution better organized, described, and preserved (as Zhou, Wen, and Dai 2020 suggest). Enacting such partnerships will require frameworks and models of collaboration based on awareness of shared responsibility, and there too the GLAMR sector could have a lead role in developing and delivering educational and PIM outreach programs.

Limitations

The results presented here are drawn from interviews and observations of five cases in New Zealand and the participants' broad collection

Table 2. Support GLAMR institutions can offer to potential donors

Area	Recommendation
Preliminary contacts	Enable simple accessible and various ways for potential donors to contact an organization Consider building proactive relationships with individuals whose collections are likely to be of value and interest
Valuation of collections	Offer guidelines to assist with the valuation of collections and decision making List other organizations beyond GLAMR that might have an interest in personal collections
Setting expectations	State what donors can expect from organizations and what an organization expects from donors State clearly what happens with the collection once it is transferred
Building skills and competences	Give or point to advice on organizing, describing, and preserving collections Make advice accessible in plain language Suggest appropriate tools and technology
Legal considerations	Point to copyright, privacy, and other issues that might impact the transfer

management practices, as seen in observations and their self-reported data. Similar studies of participants from other cultures, especially those with differing societal and familial values and traditions, may find collections are valued, managed, and transferred differently and face different challenges therein. Such studies would indeed be valuable for better understanding the overall phenomena of familial collection, which is likely to have some similar aspects globally (e.g., collection scale and longevity).

In addition, our results show the perspectives of only those individuals who wanted to invest efforts into the organization and preservation of their personal collections (inherited or otherwise). During the recruitment process, we talked to several potential participants who were time-poor and did not want to invest efforts, found the process too emotional and wanted to keep distance, did not think their collections were worth the effort, or simply thought it was not their responsibility to care about the collection they have inherited. Though such individuals were not included in the current study, their perspectives warrant further exploration. Another factor calling for further exploration that was only indicated in the results of this study is the influence of parent-child relationships on the subsequent organization of family collections.

We were limited in our ability to fully explore the digital aspect of participants' collections. The main reason for that limitation was that, even though digital items existed in the collections, participants themselves did not give much attention to managing digital items apart from scanning physical papers. One possible reason was that collections belonged to people who were used to working mostly in paper-based ways and therefore chose to print digital documents if they deemed them important. With the families who inherited collections, there was perhaps an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude toward digital documents while families prioritized clearing and organizing physical belongings. However, a follow-up study could focus exclusively on digital collections, as this is an important area for further research.

Conclusion

The Hidden Heritage research project aims to increase understanding of personal collections that have potential heritage value and investigate how to best ensure their long-term preservation and reuse. As a first step toward these goals, in this paper we explored the previously unknown perceptions, decisions, and challenges faced by people managing the personal collections of significant individuals. The results showed a range of ways people value such collections (e.g., as record, as identity, and as social or historical artifact) and revealed the issues they faced relating to management processes and decisions, including the possible implications for those collections being transferred to the GLAMR sector. Specifically, in this paper we highlighted the challenges and often difficult choices families face in dealing with the personal legacy collection of a near relative who was a significant individual. In these circumstances, we found that the affective dimension accompanying the management decision-making process was emphasized in many of the case study interviews and discussions. This has not been the focus of much previous work in the area, and we suggest that it is an area that should be explored further to understand more fully its impact on family legacy collection preservation practices. We conclude that the many decisions, challenges, and considerations involved together pose a considerable risk that personal collections, and therefore their heritage value, will be lost. One of the purposes of the research was to gain a better understanding of the challenges significant individuals and their families face to inform institutional responses. Heritage institutions can help significant individuals and their family members assess the value of their collection and to prepare for possible transfer by proactively offering guidance, raising awareness of shared responsibility for preserving collections, and working in partnership with potential donors.

We have also suggested other areas needing further attention to ensure more effective organization, preservation, and transfer of personal collections to protect them and ensure that their heritage value is retained. These areas necessarily span the purview of PIM, cultural heritage management, information behavior, and the GLAMR sector. Through this research, we have addressed a knowledge gap that exists at the intersection of several areas of information science, which is perhaps the result of a historically siloed approach to investigating common issues of both theory and practice; previous work has generally (and understandably) not accounted for the interdisciplinary and complex factors that influence PIM and are relevant for collective heritage preservation and future use. By combining these various research viewpoints in our research questions and discussion, and by placing importance on the actions of individuals, rather than on organizations, we hope that this study inspires a paradigm shift for information science and the information professions and that this leads to additional work exploring how to best support and maintain valuable personal collections for future generations.

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