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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE – 27
V SEMESTER CPE—END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2019
COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH – CE 5217- ARCHIVING AND DOCUMENTATION

Time- 2^{1/2} hrs

Max Marks- 70

Instructions

1. This paper is meant for V semester students of the BA-CPE course who have chosen the Archiving elective
2. You are allowed to use a dictionary
3. Please stick to the word-limits suggested.
4. This paper contains THREE pages and THREE sections

A. Explain thick description in 100 – 150 words. Use instances where necessary. (10 marks)

B. Read the following excerpt from 'Memory, identity and the archival paradigm' by Caroline Brown.

The emphasis on justice and the power of archives is a familiar one in archival literature and one that is frequently linked to memory. We look to Derrida's description of the archive desire as one of 'forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory' to remind us that the power of the archive is as much to do with forgetting as with remembering.

The contested realm in which we operate is one where certain stories are privileged and others marginalised by the decisions we take to keep, describe or open our collections. In seeking to be just, archivists must recognise that archives 'are witnesses not to unadorned truth but to invented contrivance. The word archive now conjures up confusion, conspiracy, exclusivity'. To demonstrate the role of archives in remembering and forgetting, many authors point to the danger of archival power falling into the 'wrong hands' while seeking to equip archivists to be the 'right hands' through a combination of self-awareness and contemplation of their moral and ethical responsibilities.

Archival literature often concentrates on the destruction of records and the subsequent or potential loss of memory or eroding of identity but prejudice or persecution may equally be encouraged through the creation and keeping of records. Comparisons between the creation and keeping of records and remembering, and between the destruction of records and forgetting, are not just confined to the recordkeeping profession.

The spread of the Internet has encouraged writers to reflect on the dangers inherent in a world where individuals and society have constant access to information and where little if anything is deleted. They argue that as well as threatening our privacy and security, the permanence of digital information and records makes us more cautious and encourages us to stop taking risks. Moreover, the Internet changes not only what we remember or forget but how we remember. David Lowenthal's views are cautionary and frequently critical, 'Surfing the Web ... shortens attention spans, interrupts cognitive flow, mangles literary structure and privileges action over reflection' and, quoting a former Librarian of Congress, '[is] inherently destructive of memory'

Writers of popular science, though more optimistic, often agree that 'thanks to search engines most simple facts don't need to be remembered'. Discussions about the relationship between media and memory are not new. As Margaret Hedstrom reminds us 'In the Phaedro, Plato contends that writing destroys memory because writing would allow memory skills to atrophy among those who became dependent on written memory-aids'.

Students, as an introduction to the nature and purpose of archives, are often encouraged to consider the differences between oral and written societies and the impact of the latter on both evidence and memory. Photographs and films are credited with forming more vivid and lasting memories but also, through manipulation, with creating false memories and forgetfulness, the eradication of figures such as Lenin and Trotsky from Soviet photographs is one example of this.

Discussions about archives and memory are not new, nor are contentions about the power of archives. However, several writers have cautioned that archivists writing about or referring to memory have not fully considered what they mean by the term or have oversimplified or generalised its relationship with archives. Concepts such as power and justice have received more considered treatment in literature, and there has been noticeably less concern amongst archivists about the equation of archives with memory than there has been amongst historians who seem more willing to deconstruct the ties between history and memory.

B.I. Answer the following in 150 – 200 words.

(3x10=30)

1. Is the difference between history and archive the same as the writer's distinction between privileged v/s marginalised stories? Explain.
2. 'Photographs and films are credited with forming more vivid and lasting memories but also, through manipulation, with creating false memories and forgetfulness, the eradication of figures such as Lenin and Trotsky from Soviet photographs' – do you share this worry with the writer? Give an example from a familiar context to show how manipulation happens.
3. From your experience of having actively archived family history this semester, write about what have you learnt about the process of selecting/unselecting material.

C. Read the following quote by Clifford Geertz.

"Understanding what people think doesn't mean you have to think the same thing. You don't just say 'whatever you do is fine.' Just saying 'it's their culture' doesn't legitimize everything. To be open to dialogue with other people doesn't mean you don't have any values of your own. I hold democratic values, but I have to recognize that a lot of other people don't hold them. So, it doesn't help much to say, 'This is the truth.' That doesn't mean I don't believe anything. The challenge is to find a way to keep one's values and identity while living with other values -- values you can neither destroy nor approve. You can't assert yourself in the world as if nobody else was there. Because this isn't a clash of ideas. There are people attached to those ideas. If you want to live without violence, you have to realize that other people are as real as you are."

C.i. Answer the following questions in 150-200 words.

(2x15=30)

4. Write about a specific moment from 'Deep Play' where the reader may see Geertz practicing the idea implicit in this quote.
5. One of the criticisms against Geertz has been that he "has encouraged the "metatwaddle" of a fashionable relativism: the idea that every culture's practices, from child sacrifice to clitoridectomy to mutilation for thieves, must get equal respect" – Do you agree with this criticism?

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