Social Media in the Canadian Government:
An Exploratory Study of Emerging Practice

by

Elizabeth M. Shaffer

M.A.S., The University of British Columbia, 2009

A DISSENTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES (Library, Archival and Information Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (Vancouver)

October 2019

© Elizabeth M. Shaffer, 2019
The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

**Social Media in the Canadian Government: An Exploratory Study of Emerging Practice**

Submitted by **Elizabeth M. Shaffer** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in **Library, Archival and Information Studies**

**Examining Committee:**

- Lisa P. Nathan, Library, Archival and Information Studies
  Supervisor

- Luanne Freund, Library, Archival and Information Studies
  Supervisory Committee Member

- Ron Cenfetelli, Sauder School of Business
  Supervisory Committee Member

- Erik Kwakkel, Library, Archival and Information Studies
  University Examiner

- Michelle Stack, Faculty of Education
  University Examiner
Abstract

Records held in national and institutional archives can serve as instruments of accountability and transparency for government actions (or inaction) and aid in constructing social memory. As digital technologies advance, records that were traditionally analogue are increasingly generated within networked digital platforms. In efforts contribute to archival and records theory on social media and accountability, this dissertation investigates emergent practices in the Government of Canada’s (GC) early use of social media, (2013–2014), when agencies and public servants were in the nascent stages of adoption.

This study undertakes a qualitative examination of two main areas of the GC’s social media use: social media and recordkeeping practices and their implications for records generation and retention, and policy instruments and frameworks regarding the role of information management and recordkeeping in its social media use and outputs.

Empirical data gathered included 28 interview participants, 34 legislative and policy instruments, online and offline observations, and 35 documentary sources, which were analyzed using a practice lens—introducing the utility of a practice lens for archival research. The main objectives of the study were to gain an understanding of the relationships between social media practices, policy, and information management and recordkeeping practices in the GC during an early phase of social media adoption and to contribute to the archival and records theory discourse surrounding shifting social media and recordkeeping practices and the implications for records as instruments of accountability.

Findings suggest that emerging social media practices at that time put a strain on existing government frameworks, particularly with regard to retaining, collecting, and preserving its own records and records under its collections mandate. Despite implementing
social media, findings also indicate that GC social media adoption and use operated in a
bureaucratic environment that struggled to effectively adopt the ethos of these platforms (e.g.
horizontal collaborations, ease of information access, etc.). The research surfaced constraints
in policy development: policies intended to support increased collaboration were challenged
by a hierarchical decision-making model.

Moving forward, this research suggests an agile approach to policy development and
an exploration of global treaty approaches in exploration of social media platform
governance models.
Lay Summary

This dissertation investigates the early use of social media by the Government of Canada. The federal government is legally responsible for preserving a record of its activities and communications for future generations, but what happens when these records are generated through, owned and controlled by social media platforms? The project draws upon practice theory as a generative lens for understanding the processes of collecting and maintaining a record of government communications produced through for-profit, privately owned, technological systems. The study offers a critical analysis of tensions that arose during early stages of social media adoption within the federal government. The project’s findings question the ability of future generations to hold the Government of Canada accountable for its actions, particularly because of the government’s use of proprietary platforms and the organizational frictions that potentially develop when technologies marketed as “agile” are adopted into bureaucratic systems.
Preface

This dissertation is the original intellectual product of the author, Elizabeth M. Shaffer. The author undertook preliminary research, which is reported in chapter three, with Luanne Freund and Mackenzie Welch. This research was presented at a GRAND conference in Toronto in May 2013. Some results presented in chapter four were presented in a paper at a GRAND conference in Ottawa in May 2014. Additionally, some of the literature review work that appears in chapter two was published in a paper by the author, “Developing an Organizational Information Policy to Mitigate the Risks Posed by Social Media Technologies” in the journal of the Australian Society of Archivists, Archives and Manuscripts, in 2011. Data collection reported in chapters three and four is covered by UBC Ethics Certificate H13-01917.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii
Lay Summary .................................................................................................................................. v
Preface .......................................................................................................................................... vi
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................ vii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................. x
List of Abbreviations .................................................................................................................... xi
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................ xii
Dedication ....................................................................................................................................... xiv

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
1.1 Motivation ................................................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Overview ................................................................................................................................... 6
1.3 Identification of the Research Problem .................................................................................... 6
1.4 Objectives of the Study ............................................................................................................ 10
1.5 Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 12
1.6 Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................................... 12
1.7 Summary and Dissertation Structure ..................................................................................... 17

Chapter 2: Literature Review—Engaging the Conversation ......................................................... 19
2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 19
2.2 Archives and Recordkeeping: Foundations, Practices, and Context .................................... 20
   2.2.1 Theoretical Foundations .................................................................................................... 20
   2.2.2 Positioning a Practice Approach ...................................................................................... 23
   2.2.3 A Postmodernist Turn ........................................................................................................ 24
   2.2.3.1 Moving Beyond the Postmodern .................................................................................... 27
   2.2.4 Sociological Based Inquiries ......................................................................................... 29
   2.2.5 Records: Contemporary Discussions ............................................................................. 30
2.3 Information Policy .................................................................................................................... 33
   2.3.1 Policy ............................................................................................................................... 33
   2.3.2 Information Policy ........................................................................................................... 35
   2.3.3 The Policy Process: An Evolving Landscape ................................................................. 36
   2.3.4 Information Policy and Social Media ............................................................................. 39
2.4 E-Government .......................................................................................................................... 43
   2.4.1 E-Government in Canada ................................................................................................. 44
   2.4.1.1 E-Government in Canada: Information and Recordkeeping ..................................... 47
   2.4.1.2 Government 2.0 ............................................................................................................ 48
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Findings in Conversation with Research Questions</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Research Question One</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Research Question Two</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Research Question Three</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Implications for Theory</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Implications for Policy</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Implications for Practice</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Conclusion</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Contributions of the Research</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Methods</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Information/Archival Studies</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3 Practice Lens</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.4 Time of Change</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.5 For-Profit Platforms and Government Responsibilities: Growing Tensions</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Future Research</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Final Thoughts</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Structure and Description of TBS Policy Instruments</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Government of Canada Policy Instruments Examined</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Selection of Documents Examined</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Interview Guide for Social Media Users/Experts</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Interview Guide for Records Managers/Archivists</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Final Codes, Categories, and Themes</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: Structure and Description of TBS Policy Instruments ........................................ 235
Table 2: Government of Canada Web 2.0 Policy Instruments Examined ......................... 236
Table 3: Additional Government of Canada Policy Instruments Examined ..................... 237
Table 4: Final Codes, Categories, and Themes .................................................................. 247
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATIP</td>
<td>Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPOG</td>
<td>Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIOB</td>
<td>Chief Information Officer Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOTUS</td>
<td>First Lady of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GANDU</td>
<td>Guideline on Acceptable Network and Device Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC</td>
<td>Government of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOL</td>
<td>Government On-Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and communication technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>Internet Memory Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Library and Archives Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>National Archives and Records Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANDU</td>
<td>Policy on Acceptable Network and Device Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCO</td>
<td>Privy Council Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POTUS</td>
<td>President of the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNSs</td>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBS</td>
<td>Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>The National Archives of the United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W3C</td>
<td>World Wide Web Consortium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and encouragement from a number of individuals who generously contributed their expertise, time and ongoing emotional support. Thank you to my Supervisor, Dr. Lisa Nathan, whose unwavering support, wisdom and encouragement throughout this whole process cannot be measured or overstated. Thank you to my committee, Dr. Luanne Freund, for her insight into social media use and government, and thoughtful and constructive feedback and to Dr. Ron Cenfetelli whose perspectives on organizational theory and ongoing encouragement were invaluable. Thank you to Dr. Luciana Duranti for her expertise in archival theory, generosity and ongoing encouragement and support; and to Dr. Pat Franks for her expertise in social media, records management and encouragement.

Thank you to the all of the participants who generously shared their time, experiences and expertise with me over the duration of the study and to the Government of Canada agencies who generously opened their doors to me.

My doctoral work has been partially supported over the years by Faculty of Arts Graduate Awards, the Anne and George Piternick Student Research Award, and PhD Student Conference and Travel Support.

My sincere appreciation to all my professors and the administrative staff at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, the iSchool at UBC who provided me with support and encouragement during my program. My sincere thanks to the iSchool Doctoral Program Chair, Dr. Heather O’Brien. Thank you to the University examiners, Dr. Erik Kwakkel and Dr. Michelle Stack; the examination chair, Dr. Annette Henry; and the external examiner, Dr. Anne J. Gilliland whose contributions strengthened my work.
Many thanks to my doctoral colleagues on this journey for their patience, friendship, collegiality and ongoing encouragement: Donald Force, Elaine Goh, Adam Jansen, Evelyn Markwei, Weimei Pan, Millicent Mabi, Sean Walker, Amelia Acker, Anna Lauren Hoffman, Rafa Absar, Saguna Shankar, Michelle Kaczmarek, Sam Dodson, Lois Evans, Darra Hofman, Alamir Novin, Jessica Bushey, Corinne Rogers, Sarah Gilbert, Colleen Addison, Sherry Xie.

Thank you to the many friends who had no idea that they signed up for such a long journey but still encouraged and supported me along the way and colleagues who offered professional advice and guidance: Liza McGuinness, Blair Galston, Shahin Sadr, Joy Gugeler, Ann Stevenson, Kim Lawson, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Katie Powell, Nina Krieger, David & Jana Schweitzer, Janey Lew, Sharon Kohn, Paras Deacon, Adina Williams, Naomi Lloyd, Tricia Logan, Fiorella Foscarini, Giovanni Michetti, Caroline Haythornthwaite, Raul Pacheco-Vega, Geoffrey Yeo, Julie McLeod, Ines Mergel, Katie Shilton, Johanna Smith, and the RSHDC crew.

Thank you to Sarah King for making my work look good and follow all the rules. Thank you to Aurora for keeping me company late into many nights. Thank you to Jenny, Crevan, Charlie, Alex, Mary & Kate for your generous hospitality, welcome humour and ongoing encouragement while I was in Ireland. Thank you to Eric, Julia and Grunt, my weekend morning crew.

Heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my parents and family whose unconditional love, support and encouragement have been a constant in my life. A special thanks to my brother Len and sister Annette without whom so much would not be possible.

And finally, to my daughter Bryn who is my inspiration. Love you, kiddo.
Dedication

For Bryn
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The link between records held in institutional archives and issues of accountability and transparency is not immediately evident to most citizens. Canadian archival scholar Tom Nesmith, in the opening of his essay “Archivists and Public Affairs: Towards a New Archival Public Programming,” makes this clear:

If you ask most Canadians what links the pursuit of Nazi war criminals, climatology, Alzheimer’s research, Aboriginal land claims, LSD medical experiments, chemical-warfare, experiments, unsolved murders from the American civil-rights era, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Stasi secret policy, Japanese Canadian wartime compensation, and the Steven Truscott murder case, few would answer archives ...

To this list archival scholar Laura Millar adds multiple “noteworthy Canadian crises of accountability,” including the management of infected blood supplies by the Canadian Red Cross, the misidentification of oil products in the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster, and the treatment of Indigenous children in residential schools. These crises of accountability, specifically the Residential School System and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that followed, served as initial motivators of my interest and ongoing motivation for this research project. The inquiry is also informed by my ongoing work with records of the Holocaust and my professional roles as an archivist, head of collections, and digital system designer and curator, specifically for collections related to social justice issues, impacts of

colonialism, and traumatic human events. For the purpose of illustrating the potential for archival records to play a significant role in mechanisms of accountability and truth telling, Canada’s truth and reconciliation efforts and related records are expounded upon here, followed by the TRC’s relationship to social media records. This relationship is then linked to the Canadian government’s use of social media and the questions the TRC raised, resulting in the subsequent research design.

In June 2008, the TRC was established by Order-in-Council as part of an effort to redress the overwhelmingly negative and devastating consequences of the Residential School System. This effort was the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which saw compensation paid to thousands of former residential school students and which developed the TRC with the intended purposes of revealing the full history of the Residential School System and guiding a healing process through truth telling. In order to prove claims for compensation and to facilitate the goals of truth telling and reconciliation, former residential school students and the TRC had to rely primarily on records held in the archives of the Christian churches that had been in charge of running the schools, Library and Archives

3 For more than a century the Canadian government in partnership with Christian churches operated the Residential School System; some government run schools remained open until the mid-1990s. More than 150,000 Indigenous children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools where “they were to be ‘civilized,’ educated, and converted to Christianity.” The survivors of these residential schools, which today are estimated to number between 70,000–80,000, share experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect that occurred during their time at these schools. Residential school survivors subsequently turned to the court system to seek justice and redress from the Canadian government and the church organizations that ran the schools. See: TRC 2012, Interim Report; Canada, Parliamentary Information and Research Service 2009, Indian Residential Schools.
Canada (LAC), and government agencies such as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. These records are integral to piecing together a comprehensive—albeit incomplete—history of events. They span more than a century and were primarily analogue in nature upon their creation (documents, photographs, registers, birth and death certificates, etc.). As such, these records are theoretically available to operate as “slivers” of a social collective memory that speak to a turbulent historical relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. These records also highlight how a broad range of government (and non-government) records have potential significance long after their original purpose. They have an evidentiary capacity to act as instruments of accountability, information materials that document this chapter in Canadian history, and instruments for healing and reconciliation efforts.

The construction of social memory in the wake of large-scale atrocities such as genocide can take many forms beyond the official documentation of the sanctioned and often government-driven processes (governments that were often the architects of or complicit in the atrocities) such as truth telling and reconciliation efforts. Official (and unofficial) records gathered and generated during these activities often make their way into contemporary networked digital systems, the affordances of which are continually evolving. Through their use and reuse these records become touchstones of historical memory work related to traumatic events.

4 Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada is now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. It was previously Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
5 Harris 2002, “Archival Sliver.”
For example, for a period of time the TRC operated a Twitter feed and a Facebook page, both documenting aspects of the process of truth telling and reconciliation and citizens’ participation therein. These social media platforms hosted the products of stakeholder engagement, which are also potential sources of evidence, historic memory, and instruments of accountability, as they aid in documenting the TRC and its processes. Such third-party social media platforms are often hailed as representing a fundamental shift from traditionally closed, hierarchical communication systems that allowed those who operated them some means of control over process and product to “open” platforms where little, if any, direct control by content providers or users is possible. What do the affordances and constraints of such technologies mean with regard to different stakeholders’ abilities to manage and preserve information and records? Will the records created by the TRC using social media be publicly accessible a century from now when future citizens look back to Canadian society’s effort to come to terms with an ugly part of its history? Will TRC social media outputs be accessible to future researchers, educators, or descendants of residential school survivors? Will the context of their creation be available for interrogation? If the answers to these questions are affirmative, whose responsibility is it to keep the records, maintain their contextual integrity, and make them accessible to the public?

As this author considered the questions that arose in the context of examining examples such as the TRC social media products, she was motivated to consider how the Government of Canada (GC) was addressing these issues more broadly. The records of western government institutions are often the responsibility of archivists and archival institutions; such a responsibility carries an implicit obligation to protect the integrity of the
relationships between citizens and governments to which records can bear witness. As the keeper of many of the records that facilitated the TRC—as well as the official archives of both government and cultural heritage in Canada—if any institution should be executing this responsibility well, it should be the GC. Such issues, like the TRC and related online records created by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and online conversations about the muzzling of Canadian scientists by the Harper government of the early 21st century, are likely relevant to future scrutiny. There is every indication that the pervasiveness of social media and mobile technologies will increase, growing the amount and variety of digital information, records, and accompanying traces (e.g. hashtags) that will be generated in the documentation of social movements and political and governmental processes, for example.

How can the concerns raised by such online networked record generation be grounded in the day-to-day consideration of information and records management and policy within the GC? This study seeks to examine the early use of social media in the GC during the initial uptake of these technologies by government employees; an important time in its development and emergent use in government. It aims to provide insight into the linkages between the culture, technologies, and policies that informed early social media practice within the GC.

6 MacNeil 2000, Trusting Records.
7 For a comprehensive overview of this issue of “muzzling government scientists,” see: Manasan 2015, “Muzzling Government Scientists.”
8 As Livia Iacovino argues, “in archival thinking, ideas about accountability have been shaped by social and political events, by technological and organizational changes, and by a range of disciplines including ethics, law, history, social sciences, auditing, risk management, computing and archival science itself.” 2010, “Arsenals of Accountability,” 182.
1.2 Overview

This introductory chapter discusses the motivation for the study, articulates the research problem, and outlines the research objectives. It provides the research questions that guided the study and offers an overview of the analytic framework employed. Finally, the structure of the dissertation is presented.

1.3 Identification of the Research Problem

In traditional archival theory and practice, the ability to classify, select, arrange, describe, preserve, and make accessible records as evidence of actions is integral to establishing and maintaining records’ evidentiary capacity as potential instruments of accountability, sources of social memory, and means of facilitating the delivery and functioning of rights and services.9

Emergent digital technologies such as social media represent a recent advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs) facilitating the collection, sharing, and storing of ever-increasing amounts of personal information about citizens and their interactions with organizations and governments. The requirements to facilitate the ongoing management of this information, to better understand how it is perceived by those who create and possess it, and to ensure the long-term preservation of an enduring documentary heritage necessitate investigation into the affordances and limitations of these technologies, the

9 As Millar states, the Canadian archival community has “long considered its central role: to acquire, preserve, and make available the documentary evidence of Canadian society.” 2014, “Coming Up with Plan B,” 118.
context in which these records are generated, the policies that govern their use and management, and the practices through which these policies are enacted.10

Governments are adopting new ways of engaging with citizens and increasing the accessibility and usability of information, fundamentally altering how they create, (re)use, manage, and eventually preserve records.11 Social media technologies are being used in their front-facing capacities to support a range of organizational and government activities—including shifts in public policy—that seek to engender greater openness, transparency, and accountability as well as political maneuvering, propaganda, and identity management. However, perhaps there was less capacity for transparency than with traditional records on the back end and over the longer term. The capabilities of emerging ICTs generally, and social media particularly, open new and innovative ways in which to facilitate the immediate and ongoing interaction between citizens and government. However, the “use of these technologies occurs within a broader information policy environment that establishes guidelines for access, use, management and preservation of information.”12 Although government agencies, public servants, and politicians are rapidly adopting social media, it is

10 LAC’s mandate is “to preserve the documentary heritage of Canada for the benefit of present and future generations; to serve as a source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, contributing to the cultural, social and economic advancement of Canada as a free and democratic society; to facilitate in Canada cooperation among the communities involved in the acquisition, preservation and diffusion of knowledge; and to serve as the continuing memory of the Government of Canada and its institutions.” See: Canada, LAC 2017, “Our Mandate.”
12 Jaeger, Bertot, and Shilton 2012, “Information Policy and Social Media.”
too often without due consideration to the broader policy environment, much of which predates the creation of social media technologies. Scholars have suggested that:

Government professionals are excited by the prospects of increased citizen engagement but concerned by what that engagement may mean for their control over the flow of information and their obligations to protect privacy, avoid censorship while preventing libel, and other inappropriate uses of government information technology resources.

Important questions have emerged in this technological context in relation to record-generating practices, recordkeeping practices, and policy. An examination of the relationship between archival theory, social media practices, recordkeeping, and policy development practices can provide insight into how each informs the others—how policy practices draw upon theory and how recordkeeping and social media practices, in adhering to and administering policy, inform a re-examination of existing theory.

Social media records pose obstacles within the context of record-making and recordkeeping. Hedstrom notes that, “Archival theory posits an explicit relationship between the functions and activities of organizations and the documentation they create.” Examining how the use of social media relates to organizational functions and structures can provide insight into understanding these materials in a broader documentary context and can facilitate an examination of existing archival and recordkeeping theory and existing theory’s utility in the face of shifting networked record-making and -keeping practices. As Botticelli states,

15 Recordkeeping is the term used predominantly by the Canadian government, but it is used interchangeably with records management throughout this dissertation.
“recordness, both in the evidential and informational senses identified by Schellenberg, depends overwhelmingly on the social context in which records are created and used.”

It is difficult to determine if the outputs of social media technologies are records, in large part because of “the absence of traditional documentary form or formal classification systems, contextual and logical relationships … manifested through hyperlinks, social tags, web feeds, and mashups.” Additionally, the interactive and collaborative nature of social media applications broadens the range of authorship in the creation of content, as collaboration may extend beyond the traditional boundaries of a government agency’s records-management policies. A growing body of scholarship argues that authorship in the digital environment is broader than the limited historical and current archival concepts of provenance provide for. As Millar states, “in Canada and around the world, the archival community is edging ever so slowly toward the real challenge of managing digital records, particularly those created outside of organizational environments.” As such, there is an ongoing discourse in the archives and recordkeeping scholarship that seeks to re-examine and articulate conceptions of records as they relate to interactive, social and networked environments.

18 Canada, LAC 2010, Foundations of Information Management.
19 USA, NARA 2010, Federal Web 2.0 Use and 2017, “Implications of Recent Web Technologies.”
1.4 Objectives of the Study

The central goal of this study is to investigate the early adoption of social media by federal government actors by drawing upon data from the Canadian government’s use of social media and the policies governing this use in the early 2000s. More specifically, this study examines the social media, recordkeeping, and policy development practices in the GC at the individual, collective, and organizational levels. Drawing on the study’s data, the findings seek to elucidate what an analysis of these practices reveals about the generation, management, and retention of social media records and their related policies; the frictions between the relevance of social media records; the shifting information and recordkeeping practices and values engendered by social media; and the role of organizational cultures in shifting recordkeeping and policy development practices. This study contributes to the broader discourse mentioned above, particularly the shifting information and policy development practices within networked systems in relation to existing information, records and policy theory, and structures.

The case study of the GC is used to explore the connections amongst records-generating, policy-making, and recordkeeping practices related to the use of social media tools during a period in which government social media use was viewed with both great enthusiasm and significant apprehension. The study provides a snapshot of government social media use at a key moment in its evolution from grassroots outlier to its emergence as effective campaign and communication tools for “the first social media president” and the
communication medium of choice for the 45th president of the United States. It undertakes a critical examination of two main areas of the GC’s use of social media:

1. Information and records management: Social media and recordkeeping *practices* and their implications for records generation and retention; and

2. Social media policy: GC’s *policy* instruments and policy-generating frameworks with regard to the role of information management and recordkeeping in its use of social media and management of the resulting outputs.

These areas are examined through empirical data gathered to establish relationships between recordkeeping and information policy, and the generation, use, management, and preservation of records created by the use of social media in government.

The main objectives of the study are:

- To gain an understanding of the relationships between social media practices, policy, and information management and recordkeeping practices in the GC during an early phase of social media adoption;

- To contribute to the discourse surrounding shifting social media and recordkeeping practices and their implications for efforts to support long-term accountability through records.

---

24 See, for example, the August 2018 tweet by Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland calling for the release of civil society activists in Saudi Arabia that set off an international incident. Ljunggren, Yaakoubi, and Paul 2018, “A Canadian Tweet.”
1.5 Research Questions

This study seeks to investigate the information management, recordkeeping, and policy implications of social media use by a national government. Three broad research questions guided the inquiry. These questions reference the time frame when data collection took place (2013-2014):

1. How was social media used by GC public servants as it became widespread in society? This question aims to explore the social media practices of federal government agencies and individual public servants and how these practices informed (and were informed by) information flows, processes, and records generation at the time.

2. What types of information and records were generated with social media by the GC? This question aims to examine the perceived value of information and records generated by social media use situating the discussion within the ongoing discourse in the archives and recordkeeping scholarship.

3. What were the relationships between government records policies and social media practices? This question examines how government policies and their development frameworks informed (and were informed by) social media practices of the time.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is interdisciplinary in its approach to studying information generation, recordkeeping, and policy practices emerging from government public servants’ engagement with evolving technological infrastructures and tools. Situated at the nexus of emerging social media technologies, shifting information and record-generating practices, and existing
policy infrastructures, this study aims to provide insight into the linkages between the culture, technologies, and policies that informed early social media practice within the GC, particularly in relation to the evolution of negotiated information and recordkeeping practices. This study employs grounded theory exemplified by Kathy Charmaz and draws upon key tenets of practice theory as developed by a number of well-known social theorists and organizational studies scholars (such as Andreas Reckwitz, Theodore Schatzki, Alan Warde, Martha Feldman, Wanda Orlikowski, etc.). These tenets include:

- Rejection of dualism: Opposing the division of objects and subjects, mind and body;
- Materiality: The importance of materiality in the production of social life and the active agency attributed to non-human agents;
- Incorporation of human and non-human agents and actions: Interaction should also include the relations with organizations, institutions and their mediating artifacts such as policies and standards;
- Reproduction of the social: What goes on in practices contributes to maintaining practices;
- Knowledge is often established within practices: Knowledge is at least partly constructed in practice, in interactions with participating objects and subjects;

28 Huizing and Cavanagh 2011, “Contemporary Practice Theory.”
• Interconnected practices/interdependencies between diverse elements: The social and material nature of practices are situated in time and space, comprise inconsistencies and tensions, and allow for collective and individual agency;

• Socially recognized and named sets of activities oriented towards ends: While open-ended, practices are activities that gain sense when organized around an end or object;29

• Generative of rules and norms: Practices generate rules and norms.

The decision to apply a practice lens stems from the researcher’s interest in how emerging social media practices (i.e. the systems, tools, expectations, norms, and policies) are experienced by those in government roles and in seeking greater understanding of how participants adapt their practices.30 In turn, what concerns are held regarding how emerging social media practices will influence citizens’ capacities to hold governments accountable through information and records, the consequences for long term remembering, and the accompanying policy infrastructures. Inevitably, new systems, technologies, and practices will develop and require the experiences of those negotiating the phenomena to adapt. As argued by Feldman and Orlikowski, a central tenet of a practice lens is the idea that social life is an ongoing production, which emerges through individuals’ recurrent actions.31 They highlight that the capacity that such a lens “affords for analyzing social, technological and

29 Nicolini and Monteiro 2017, “Practice Approach.”
30 Individuals were identified and interviewed based on their knowledge and/or experience of government recordkeeping, government social media use and preservation, and/or policy development and implementation.
organizational phenomena.”\textsuperscript{32} Applied in this study, a practice lens is a generative means of articulating the complexity of the social relationships and social and organizational processes and mechanisms under examination.\textsuperscript{33} As an interdisciplinary research approach, a practice theoretical framework is “based on a set of ontological and epistemological arguments about the nature of social reality”—that is, it is socially influenced and facilitates the study of the interplay of individuals, artefacts, and actions, positioning social and organizational practices as the central unit of analysis.\textsuperscript{34}

This study uses grounded theory and a practice approach to analyze the data collected; it is a generative lens through which social media is seen in relation to archives and recordkeeping theory in a government context. Drawing on key practice theorists, some whose work operationalizes practice theory in relation to organizational phenomena,\textsuperscript{35} the usefulness of a practice lens for investigating the use of emerging social media technologies in a government setting allows the researcher to examine transformation and stability within this environment.\textsuperscript{36} The argument for a practice theory approach and the concepts employed are further expanded upon in chapter three.

In utilizing a practice approach, the researcher strives to employ a “new perspective for describing and analyzing the social, cultural, and technological dimensions of practice”

\textsuperscript{32} Feldman and Orlikowski 2011, 1240.
\textsuperscript{33} Ivanov 2017, “Practice Theory.” Practice lens is used interchangeably throughout this study with practice approach and practice thinking.
\textsuperscript{35} Feldman and Orlikowski 2011; Orlikowski 2000; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny 2001; Reckwitz 2002.
\textsuperscript{36} Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012, \textit{Dynamics of Social Practice}. 


within archival, recordkeeping and information policy spheres.\(^{37}\) This study seeks to engage with the dialogues from these areas, particularly as they involve what Ivanov calls the “interpretive paradigm in archival and recordkeeping research.”\(^{38}\) Stemming from the need for a more pluralistic understanding of records and archives, the increasing growth of electronic and digital information technologies, and a growing recognition that the relationship between practices and theory within archives and recordkeeping can be fraught and/or non-existent, this study seeks to contribute to the dialogue around records and recordkeeping that began with post-modern archival theorists and continued with ethnographic and situated studies of record-making and recordkeeping practices in specific environments.\(^{39}\)

Additionally, this study employs policy analysis to examine the policies related to the use of social media by GC agencies and public servants, with a specific focus on information and recordkeeping. Policy analysis considers past, present, and prospective in the analysis of the policy instruments and related data and is both analytical and descriptive.\(^{40}\) Practice theory, which facilitates the consideration of the context of policy-making, including people, institutions, and dominant modes of thinking, is drawn upon to interpret the role of policy

\(^{38}\) Ivanov 2017.
development and implementation. By analyzing information policy instruments relevant to social media and information management, as well as key memos, papers, and presentations within the GC that directly relate to social media use by federal agencies and public servants during this time, the researcher seeks to illustrate the complexity of existing policy frameworks, often developed prior to social media uptake.

1.7 Summary and Dissertation Structure

This chapter has introduced the purpose of this study, which is to explore the relationship between social media and recordkeeping practices and information policy in government using the case study of the Canadian federal government.

Chapter two discusses the literature the researcher draws upon and the conversations in which she seeks to situate the study’s findings.

Chapter three outlines the research design, including the research methodology, the selection and characteristics of the participants in the case study, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter four presents the research findings and themes identified from the data analysis.

Chapter five discusses and evaluates the findings in relation to the research questions and objectives of the study.

Chapter six presents conclusions and implications, including the main contributions of this study, and outlines future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review—Engaging the Conversation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the research study within the context of archival, recordkeeping and information policy discourse, principally in relation to shifting socio-technical practices and their potential to influence the role of records as instruments of evidence and accountability. Incorporating a practice approach which is described in chapter three, I strive to engage a “new perspective for describing and analyzing the social, cultural, and technological dimensions of practice” within archival, recordkeeping and information policy spheres.42 This study seeks to engage with the dialogues from these areas, particularly as they involve what Ivanov calls the “interpretive paradigm in archival and recordkeeping research.”43 This turn began with the post-modernists and continued with ethnographic and situated studies of record-making and -keeping in specific environments.44 Following appeals from researchers who call for investigating the pragmatic, social and cultural aspects of digital records creation and recordkeeping,45 a practice approach is a generative framework for studying the heterogeneous organizational milieu that contributes to the generation of digital information

43 Ivanov 2017.
45 See, for example: Foscarini 2010, “Approaches to Record Management”; Oliver and Foscarini 2014, People Problem; Dallas 2016, “Digital Curation.”
artefacts. Moreover, this chapter illuminates the difficulties surfaced in relation to emerging social media use in government, particularly those related to records and policy issues.

The study design and research questions were framed by my engagement with the literature leading up to the data collection period (2013–2014). My subsequent engagement with related conversations and further readings of more recent literature informed the analysis of the data and conclusions drawn. As the topic of study—social media use in government—is an evolving subject, conversations are ongoing and literature consistently emerging, which continually adds more contextualization to a body of literature that continues to negotiate the practices, technologies, and the affordances and challenges they present.

2.2 Archives and Recordkeeping: Foundations, Practices, and Context

2.2.1 Theoretical Foundations

Traditionally, archival science was defined as the body of knowledge concerning the nature and characteristics of records and archives including theory, methodology, and practice.46 As Elizabeth Shepherd articulates, “It encompasses the creation, preservation, and use of records in their functional context … and the wider social, legal, and cultural environment within which records are created and used.”47 Conventionally, archival theory is defined as the whole of the ideas that archivists hold about what archival material is, its nature and characteristics; archival methodology comprises the concepts and ideas that archivists hold

47 Shepherd 2010, “Archival Science.”
about how to handle archives; and archival practice is the application of both theory and methodology to real world situations. Additionally, archival scholars remind us that archives are social constructions. Archival scholar Terry Eastwood draws attention to what he considers to be a “central assumption” in archival science:

Archives are social creations in the sense that they are a product of human society. So, many of the ideas about their nature inevitably conjure the circumstances by which they come into being, are formed, and transmitted through time and space, and the qualities they take on as a result of the processes they undergo.

Custodial archival theory has its roots in ancient legal and administrative principles, primarily those of ancient Rome, where public records offices developed from private recordkeeping and storage offices (tablinum) of public servants. The legislation of ancient Rome provided the early foundations of the nature and role of archives in society and the obligations of those responsible for them. The idea that “antiquity provides records with the highest authority, that deposit in a public place guarantees the reliability of records as witnesses of action, and that unbroken custody ensures records’ authenticity” are foundations of traditional Eurocentric archival ideas that are drawn from ancient Roman legal concepts. Modern archival history begins following the French Revolution with the establishment of public national archives, separating them from the reach of government administrative departments.

---

54 Duranti 1996, 2.
55 Shepherd 2010, “Archival Science.”
The influence of European archival thinking on early modern discourse in archives is exemplified by the seminal works of the Dutch trio, Samuel Muller, Johan Adriaan Feith, and Robert Fruin, the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, and the English archival scholar Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*. The relationship of documents to the facts and acts to which they bear witness is at the core of these theories, explaining their evidentiary capacity as well as their capacity to extend memory. As the late Canadian archival scholar Terry Cook states:

> The central mantra of archives has traditionally focused on evidence … Our [archivists’] central professional concepts of *respect des fonds*, original order, and provenance were designed precisely in order to preserve records as evidence of the functional-structural context and actions that caused their creation.

The centrality of evidence and memory of social actions has long been at the core of archival discourse, along with the inter-relatedness of records, the archival bond, and the central importance of context. As archival scholar Anne Gilliland states, “concern for evidence permeates all archival activities and demands complex approaches to the management of information.”

---

56 Eastwood 2019, “Archival Theory.”
59 The archival bond is a concept in archival theory that references the relationship that records have with other records produced as part of the same activity. Such bonds are central components of individual records as the ability to draw meaning from records is reliant on the interrelationships with other records. Duranti 1997, “Archival Bond.”
As is discussed in the following sections, there is a growing recognition of a need for a more pluralistic understanding of records and archives in light of a post-colonial landscape, increased awareness of the ubiquity of emerging digital information technology use, and a mounting recognition that the relationship between the ways practitioners manage records and the academic theories about archives and recordkeeping can be fraught and/or non-existent. As such, there exists increased awareness of the shortcomings of traditional archival theory in addressing pluralistic understandings of records as evidence and collective memory.62 Such awareness gave rise to what Ivanov calls the “interpretive research paradigm in archival and recordkeeping research,” arguably making room for contributions garnered from a practice approach.63

2.2.2 Positioning a Practice Approach

While practices (as modes of action) have been viewed as central to archival and recordkeeping research, they have often been the focus of prescriptive guidance in relation to existing archival theory—resulting in directional instruments seeking to shape archival functions—based on existing theory (e.g. standards, manuals, policies, etc.), with the emergence of interpretive research a more recent development.64 Arguably, a practice lens can contribute to the development of a more interpretive and less prescriptive discourse. This is particularly critical as a means of illuminating the adapting and shifting practices of those

64 Ivanov 2017.
operating in networked environments and utilizing emerging technologies, often resulting in
a “constant accumulation of meaning and metadata.” Previously, these traces of and
reflections on contemporary decision-making would have been found in more formal
correspondence and made their way into the archives. However, with the pervasiveness of
organizational use of emerging digital ICTs, these records can exist outside of traditional
recordkeeping systems and be elusive when it comes to issues such as preservation,
completeness, and accessibility.

2.2.3 A Postmodernist Turn

The latter half of the twentieth and the early part of the twenty-first centuries witnessed
social, political, and technological developments that have informed archival theory and
practice. Cultural theorists writing outside of the archival discipline drew attention to the
archive (in the singular) as a site of examination with regard to how archives are shaped by
the actions of individuals and the role of “archiving” in shaping memory and discourse about
the past.

The postmodernist mantle was taken up by a number of archival scholars, beginning
in the 1990s, who applied this thinking to traditional archival concepts and principles,
highlighting what they saw as limitations of the line of previous scholarship, pushing for a

66 Gilliland 2016, 713.
67 See, for example: Acker and Kriesberg 2017, “Tweets May Be Archived.”
more interpretivist approach which considered contemporary social, political, and technological developments to studying records, recordkeeping and archives.70 This scholarship began to recognize the role of dominant archival practices, ways of conceptualizing and managing records, in shaping the evidentiary and collective memory value of these records. Scholarship focused on the recognition of the larger socio-political influences in archival and recordkeeping practice as well as the power dynamics, bias and influence present in the individual practices of records professionals in managing and preserving records.71 For archival scholars such as Eric Ketelaar, who problematized the “neutral custodian” trope of the archivist, accepted archival practices have an ongoing role in shaping records and archives. He stresses the role of technologies (from filing systems through digital tools) and socio-cultural factors in “the reality we record and the way in which we record”—emphasizing the role of the non-human agent in documenting activities.72 The “social, cultural, political, economic and religious contexts” of records creation, maintenance and use determine what Ketelaar terms the “archive’s semantic genealogy.”73 Arguing for a pluralistic approach, Ketelaar advocates a deconstructing of the

73 Ketelaar 2001, 136 and 149.
“tacit narratives” present in archival documents, institutions and systems in order to understand the meanings in archives.  

This postmodern dialogue argued for more inclusive and intercultural perspectives in records and archives scholarship and practice. However, it is important to note that these postmodernist archival scholars did not seek to replace the theoretical foundations of the field—provenance, respect des fonds, original order, evidence, authenticity, etc.—but to “problematize their understanding, and consequently their use in both research and practice.” This is beginning to shift, however, as more scholarship begins to critique principles such as provenance as it is manifested in traditional archival studies.  

While the role of emergent technologies and related information practices are beginning to be examined in the context of traditional archival theory and practice, a dominant discourse of accountability, transparency and trust still underlies actions in contemporary archival practices, particularly in the context of national archives, which often stand as repositories of government generated records in support of these goals. The evidentiary capacity of records, particularly in a government context, is linked to issues of

74 Ketelaar 2001.
79 See, for example: Price and Smith 2011, “Trust Continuum.”
transparency and trust which “are essential … for public accountability.” As Eastwood observes, “a strong case can be made that there is a public will and deep-seated public interest in preservation of government records as a vehicle of democratic accountability.”

2.2.3.1 Moving Beyond the Postmodern

In his article “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms,” the archival scholar Terry Cook charts the path of what he terms “archival paradigms” over the past 150 years, dividing them into four phases. According to Cook, the initial focus was on evidence, which dominated the professional archival discourse until the 1930s, followed by a focus on cultural memory, which flourished through the 1970s. Identity, Cook argues, is the third paradigm in which the archivist aids “society in forming its own multiple identities through recourse to archival memory and [is] an active agent protecting evidence in the face of the blistering complexity of rapidly changing societal organizations and digital media.” This third paradigm witnessed a shift in government administrations away from “mono-hierarchical Weberian structures” and saw the advent of the digital age, in which records were increasingly electronic, computer-generated, fluid and transient. Additionally, the link between archives and justice and human rights was strengthened by moves for greater accountability and transparency in government, in part due to new freedom of information legislation. The fourth archival paradigm, which

83 Cook 2013, 110.
according to Cook is on the horizon, is community. In this fourth paradigm, Cook envisions archivists as community facilitators, mentors and coaches who encourage archiving as a participatory process.\textsuperscript{84} Quoting records and archives scholar Geoffrey Yeo, Cook argues that attention to community perspectives “may oblige archivists to revisit traditional perceptions and extend their understanding of records to encompass new forms of evidence and more fluid manifestations of human memory.”\textsuperscript{85} This argument is gaining traction amongst some archival scholarship.\textsuperscript{86} It is important to note that Cook does not see any one paradigm as wholly replacing the one that came before it, but rather as building on earlier ones.

As records and archives professionals seek to better understand and facilitate records creation in digital and online environments, Cook argues that the “digital era” offers archives an opportunity to “flourish” as a concept, a practice, an institution and a profession, giving new agency and voice to citizens who, through digital technologies such as social media, are generating “all kinds of new and potentially exciting, and potentially archival, traces of human life.”\textsuperscript{87}

Archival scholars have also problematized and “reconceptualised” records and archives in relation to online and networked environments.\textsuperscript{88} Adrian Cunningham, discussing

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{84} Cook 2013, 114.
\textsuperscript{85} Yeo 2009, “Introduction,” x.
\textsuperscript{87} Cook 2013, “Shifting Archival Paradigms,” 97.
\end{flushleft}
the dynamic nature of social media and other web-based content, posits a shift in approach from “object-oriented thinking,” which regards information resources as static information objects, to “event-oriented thinking,” which he argues better reflect how users experience the web. Information scholars Acker and Kriesberg highlight the complexity of archiving social media as “activity streams,” raising issues such as completeness of data, context and proprietary platforms as challenging archivists and information professionals to effectively preserve and make accessible these forms of data.

2.2.4 Sociological Based Inquiries

Drawing on sociology, particularly workplace studies and organizational and information culture theories, archival scholars have studied the role of individuals, culture and technology practices in records creation and management, seeking to better understand the socio-cultural practices that contribute to the nature of records. These studies highlight the influences on record generation at multiple levels: individual, procedural (system level), and cultural (often manifested in relation to and/or through systems).

A number of studies have examined the role of archivists as they interpret organizational rules in attempts to gain insight into the role of procedures in the shaping of actions and information/record generation. As Ivanov points out, these studies demonstrate

89 Cunningham 2009, “Evidence of Government 2.0.”
the utility of practices as an empirical unit of analysis in archives and recordkeeping research.92

While these studies point to the importance of investigating situated practices and organizational culture in understanding the generation and management of records and information, there is still a dearth of empirical research into how information/record making and keeping practices inform or are informed by emerging ICTs.93 Emerging ICTs facilitate new information practices and potentially create novel information objects.94 Yet these applications do not wholly replace existing practices and their associated technologies; instead, they are usually adopted alongside older technologies and incorporated into existing practices, potentially altering both.95 A practice theory approach adds new perspective to this developing body of knowledge.

### 2.2.5 Records: Contemporary Discussions

The record as a concept is at the foundation of archival studies.96 The role of records as “persistent” representatives of activities and their capacity to act as evidence has long been at the core of archival discourse.97 A number of fundamental assumptions, grounded in


Cicciolo 2009, “Information and Communications Technologies.”

95 Deibert 1997, Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia; Jenkins 2006, Old and New Media.96

Caswell 2016, “Archival Studies.”


92

93

94

95

96

97
traditional Eurocentric archival theory and practice, underlie how records manifest in a specific context—for example, the GC. However, there is ongoing discussion and debate within archives and recordkeeping scholarship regarding the nature and definition of records. Definitions of records and recordkeeping are contextual and differ in varying regards informed by broader socio-juridical landscapes, broadening pluralistic perspectives, and emerging digital technologies.

Archival scholar Caroline Williams divides approaches to defining records into two broad categories—exclusive and inclusive:

The ‘exclusive’ category is quite prescriptive and permits only those records that individually display very specific attributes to be defined as such, and excludes all others. The ‘inclusive’ category takes a more flexible approach which permits, under certain conditions, a range of aggregated information resources to be brought into scope.

Traditionally the product of national archives and standards organizations, exclusive records definitions support requirements that records are authentic, reliable, and have the ability to act as auditable evidence for their creators. Often prescriptive in nature, such definitions are linked to the transactional nature of records and their requirement as trustworthy agents in support of both organizational needs and compliance as well as in broader service of

---


100 Williams 2013, “Records and Archives,” 12.

accountability, transparency, and the protection of rights.  

It is on the basis of this assumption that government records (and information) in recordkeeping and information management systems—and subsequently those records held in national government archives—are intended to have informational value, evidential capacity, and memorial value to the societies they are meant to serve.

As this research examined records and information generated as a result of social media practices in the GC, it is relevant to note the following definitions. The Library and Archives of Canada Act, which governs and guides the actions of LAC, defines a record as “any documentary material other than a publication, regardless of medium or form.” It further defines a government record as “a record that is under the control of a government institution.” Additionally, the GC’s 2007 “Policy on Information Management” defines records as “information created, received, and maintained by an organization or person for business purposes, legal obligations, or both, regardless of medium or form.” These GC definitions are broad and include room for interpretation. Such definitions have the potential to support a more inclusive view of records. As software and platforms increasingly support the production of new and unique digital information artefacts, a broader adoption of inclusivity toward those forms of information and data perceived as having long-term value is potentially required to ensure the ongoing preservation, access, and usability of some government records.

102 Shepherd and Yeo 2003, Managing Records, xii.
103 Canada 2004, Library and Archives of Canada Act, under “Interpretation and Application.”
The nature of digital records, often comprised of “granular objects that are scattered yet linked e.g. chains of emails or tweets,” tests more traditional conceptions of records and complicates the ability to maintain and sustain records as evidence over time. Archival scholars present a variety of “differing visions and perspectives” on how to approach the definition and management of records in emerging and evolving digital environments. As the question “what is a record?” continues to be the subject of archival and recordkeeping scholarship, an exploration of the practices that generate records in social media platforms can contribute to this discourse and provide evidence-based findings that contribute to greater understanding of these digital artefacts.

2.3 Information Policy

As this research examines the role of information policy in how social media practices interact, inform, and are informed by policy frameworks, this section discusses concepts and methods related to the policy process, contextualizing a discussion of public policy frameworks and functions in relation to information and records management.

2.3.1 Policy

UNESCO defines policy as “a set of principles and strategies which guide a course of action for the achievement of a given goal.” While broad, this definition is comprehensive and

---


clear in defining the purpose of policy. Necessary in order to address the divergent views of multiple stakeholders, policies privilege a particular approach or set of value priorities. Policies can govern practice and are embedded in the context(s) in which they operate so that the values, perspectives, and norms of these environments—often manifested through practices—will influence the interpretation of policies and the process of policy-making.

Policy generation can also be about making choices under tight resource constraints, potentially leading to conflicts due to resource scarcity, choice constraints, and confronted values and needs. As Richard Simeon describes, “policy emerges from the play of economic, social and political forces, as manifested in and through institutions and processes.”

Contemporary policy problems often do not fall neatly into governmental or organizational divisions, and policy analysts may not have access to the full breadth of information required to fully understand and address the policy problem. The ongoing social, economic, and technological changes associated with the internet inform public policy development as do citizens, corporations, NGOs, and the knowledge held by individuals within organizations. Better understanding the role of practices in public policy development can generate a better understanding of the policy making process, particularly as it engages with emergent and ever-evolving technological developments.

109 Social media platforms’ terms of service and lack of transparency with regard to metadata, completeness of data, etc. can make full information difficult or impossible to obtain.
2.3.2 Information Policy

Information policy, in its current form (both public and organizational), is relatively young. There is no all-encompassing policy; rather, information policies tend to address specific issues and, at times, are fragmented, overlapping, and contradictory, depending on the issues they seek to address. Information policy issues include, but are not limited to, freedom of information, privacy, censorship, data protection, security and secrecy, access, intellectual property and ownership, openness, information infrastructure, and information flows. An information policy is a set of often interconnected principles and strategies (as manifested in laws, regulations, rules, etc.) that guide the production, collection, organization, manipulation, storage, distribution, retrieval, use, access, preservation, and destruction of information and records.

Information policies are subject to power relations involving different groups of stakeholders. There are differences in the relative power held by such groups; for example, between the individuals and organizations that are subject to legislation as part of policy and the government that determines such policy, or between ICT vendors and the individuals who must use them within a government or organization.

111 Mairéad Browne argues that early de facto information policies existed, citing Galileo at the receiving end of Papal information policy, but notes that more generally agreed upon beginnings of modern information policies are in the 1960s, with most countries developing information policies in the 1970s and 1980s. Organizational information policy really began to take root in the 1990s. See Browne 1997, “Fundamental Concepts”; Orna 2008, “Information Policies.”
Information policy is predicated on the requirements of an agency or department to control the way in which it creates, records, controls, uses, communicates, retains, and destroys information in relation to its goals and objectives. Information policy at this level guides decision-making and actions around the use and management of information within an agency in order to support and achieve the desired outcomes of particular goals. It serves as a framework that situates information within the broader context of the agency and aids it in carrying out its mandate. Contemporary information policy discussions are often informed by e-government (electronic or digital government) and the role of ICTs at national and international levels. Governments are increasingly using the internet and mobile technologies to communicate with citizens, engage in commerce and political activities, and deliver services, amongst other things.

2.3.3 The Policy Process: An Evolving Landscape

The policy cycle model or policy lifecycle, developed by US researchers in the 1960s and 70s, is one of the most influential models of the public policy process. Common steps in the policy process include a combination of:

- **Defining the problem** and **agenda-setting** where the issue or problem to be addressed is identified.

---

115 Orna 2008.
• The policy formulation stage in which rules or actions to address or solve the problem are identified based on some type of rationale.\textsuperscript{118}

• The policy adoption or decision-making stage is where the policy is voted on and can be susceptible to a failure to anticipate adverse or other policy consequences.\textsuperscript{119}

• The policy implementation stage follows and can be a vulnerable stage for the policy with a number of factors contributing to its success or failure (e.g. agents involved in the process, funding, legitimacy issues, etc.).\textsuperscript{120}

• The final stage, policy evaluation, seeks to understand how well the policy does in achieving its goals. Failures at this stage of the process may include insufficient learning due to ineffective or inappropriate policy monitoring and/or feedback mechanisms.

Trends in modern policy development include evidence-based policy making and participative policy making.\textsuperscript{121} Evidence-based policy making is a contemporary effort to reform or restructure the public policy process by prioritizing the amount and type of information processed in policy decision-making and assessment.\textsuperscript{122} However, without the analytical capacity, such policy-making efforts are severely hampered and potentially easily manipulated for political purposes. Policy analytical capacity in the Canadian federal

\textsuperscript{118} Issues associated with policy failures at this stage include “attempting to deal with wicked problems without appropriately investigating or researching problem causes or the probable effects of policy alternatives.” Howlett 2009, 161.
\textsuperscript{119} Howlett 2009.
\textsuperscript{120} Howlett 2009; Burger 1993, Information Policy.
\textsuperscript{121} See, for example: Howlett 2009; Janssen and Helbig 2018, “Policy-Cycle.”
\textsuperscript{122} Howlett 2009.
government, according to Canadian policy scholar Michael Howlett, is uneven in its
distribution and varies by department and/or agency.123

While expert-based approaches to policy making still dominate, contemporary policy
development processes typically include criteria for consultation and increasingly a
recognition that stakeholder involvement in participatory approaches seek to better
understand the needs and opinions of stakeholders in policy direction.124 From its beginnings
in the early 1960s through the 1990s, information policy in the GC had been developed
within government with little input from external stakeholders.125 Recently, the GC has been
experimenting with more participatory policymaking approaches in attempts to address the
impact of technologies such as social media on the policy process.126 One such effort is the
Deputy Ministers’ Committee on Policy Innovation, created in November 2012.127 The
committee was initially established to study the relationship between social media and
policy-making and the potential impacts on policy development and public engagement. In
December 2013 the committee broadened its scope to include investigating new technologies
and trends in participatory policy development.128

Quoting from briefing documents prepared for the committee in December 2013 and
obtained under the Access to Information Act, Jason Fekete reports on a “Dragon’s
Den”-style policy process where public servants can pitch policy ideas to federal deputy ministers. The documents reveal that piloting such innovations in the government policymaking process is in reaction to the “undoing” of “governments’ monopoly on policy analysis” due to the rise of social media and its impact on policy development and government communications. According to the documents, “the speed of social media interactions puts pressure on government to develop quick and coordinated responses, which can conflict with longer-term policy and communications planning and priority setting.”

The use of policy analysis frameworks and models aids in understanding the ways in which people make decisions, and addresses some of the questions asked in the policy development process: What are the goals of policy? Who are the stakeholders? What are the issues the policy is intended to address? What regulations, laws, and standards must be complied with? Is the policy effective?

### 2.3.4 Information Policy and Social Media

Increased use of social media by governments takes place within the broader information policy environment, often without proper consideration given to this larger policy context. Three primary issues arise at the intersection of social media use in government and information policy: firstly, many of the policy instruments that address identified issues of

---

129 Fekete 2014.
131 Fekete 2014.
privacy, security, access, and preservation predate the existence of social media; secondly, emerging social media policy instruments are often predicated on anticipated or perceived hurdles (e.g. liability, unauthorized use, etc.) and seek to circumvent and/or ameliorate them with little empirical evidence of how these technologies are actually being used; and thirdly, social media technologies are changing at a rapid pace, with the creators of these platforms having full control over their features, making the government’s capacity to adapt and adjust to ever-changing platforms challenging or impossible. Evidence-based policy-making regarding these phenomena is at a nascent stage; a greater understanding of the emerging social media practices in government can assist in advancing effective policy instruments.

Early social media policies adopted a command-and-control tone, primarily focusing on use by employees, prescribing what was and was not permissible and often including a ban on third-party platforms in organizational and government contexts. As organizations and governments began adopting social media more broadly and grassroots adoption by individuals became entrenched in broader agency information practices and moved through a more formalized adoption process, the tone began to change. While issues of privacy, security, access, and records management were raised in the literature, government


Mergel 2012, Using Twitter in Government.

See, for example: Jarrahi and Sawyer 2015, “Theorizing.”

Mergel 2012, Using Twitter in Government; Mergel and Bretschneider 2013, “Adoption Process.”

agencies began to be “concerned about much more basic questions” such as understanding how to link the use of social media to an agency’s mission, how to measure impact of online engagement, and how to determine who is responsible for content in social media platforms.138

As policy issues were raised in both the grey and scholarly literature,139 social media policy instruments emerged that sought to address a variety of issues presented by social media use in organizations and government agencies.140 These policy instruments range in scope and quality, from use and posting guidelines to more comprehensive organizational and government policies.141 The majority of policy instruments are informational in their guidance, urging users and agencies to ensure recognition, capture, and preservation of potential records.142 There is a dearth of policy instruments based on evidence of how individuals and agencies are actually using social media in their daily information practices.

Social media policies that attempted to add social media technologies into existing standards of administrative practices often fell short of fully engaging social media

140 Boudreaux 2011, “Social Media Policies.”
141 Boudreaux 2011.
Researchers studying Swedish government social media policies argue that there is an impulse to view new social media technologies in relation to earlier technologies; however, this attitude fails to “fully comprehend the social media infrastructure” in that it is not just an improvement upon existing technologies but a break from these communication technologies and “a medium that changes the ways in which communication occurs.” Just as Cook argued that the shifting archival paradigms he identified are overlapping and require an examination of emerging complexities that arise from new forms of evidence and evolving manifestations of social remembering. Klang and Nolin argue:

Policy regulation need[s] to take account of the regulative power inscribed in the technological artifact itself. The artifact, together with the regulative system, can be seen as a technological system. As the restrictions and affordances of the technological artifact tend to flatten traditional hierarchies of regulation, different rights and obligations are pitted against each other in new and original ways.

This complexity is particularly visible in attempts to resolve the public and private roles of government employees within the framework of ICT infrastructure. Here, they argue, “policies show an overwhelming desire to simplify reality” in the view that individuals’ public and private personas are static rather than fluid and thus mistakenly have one policy to address all of these roles. The greatest conflict arises between the increased ability to participate in democracy that social media technologies facilitate and the focus of policy instruments, which is on the preservation of administrative routines.

---

143 Klang and Nolin 2011, “Disciplining Social Media.”
144 Klang and Nolin 2011, under “Sufficiency of Social Media Strategies and Policies.”
145 Klang and Nolin 2011.
146 Klang and Nolin 2011.
147 Klang and Nolin 2011.
The above review has aided in situating the conversation on social media policy in the context of information policy, positioning the analysis and discussion of information policy in relation to social media practices, which follows in the following chapters.

2.4 E-Government

Governments at all levels around the world began adopting e-government in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, by shifting to information and services online. Simply defined, electronic government (e-government) is “the use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve better government.” There are potentially as many flavours of e-government as there are governments and, as the concept is in constant development, the differences often reflect priorities in government strategies. Categorizations of e-government run the spectrum, including online-based activities such as service delivery, the use of ICTs in government more broadly, and the capacity of ICTs to “transform public administration.” E-government is viewed as “the next step … toward the creation of an information society.” In the early days of the movement towards e-government, the promised benefits were vast:

E-government, if implemented properly, can improve current government services, increase accountability, result in more accurate and efficient delivery of services, reduce administrative costs and time spent on repetitive tasks for government employees, facilitate greater transparency in the administration of government, and allow greater access to services due to the around the clock availability of the Internet.

149 OECD 2003.
While the potential of e-government has often been framed as boundless, it is not without its challenges. Obstacles posed by e-government will be discussed in the following sections, particularly in relation to government social media use and information and recordkeeping issues.

2.4.1 E-Government in Canada

E-government in Canada began in the mid-1990s with an external focus on connecting Canadian citizens, companies and communities to the internet, and the GC soon realized the potential for internal government modernization and service delivery reform that would link government to its stakeholders. The 1999 Speech from the Throne outlined the government’s commitment to use information technologies and connect Canadians to government services and information:

   The Government will become a model user of information technology and the Internet. By 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing.

The Government On-Line initiative (GOL), which was intended to meet this commitment by providing electronic access to key government programs and services had its tenure between 1999 and 2006. GOL marked a profound shift in how the government dealt with the public.

152 See, for example: Jaeger 2003; Roy 2006, E-Government in Canada.
153 Roy 2006.
and related internal infrastructure and culture.\textsuperscript{155} The GC website, launched in 2001, provided an entryway to hundreds of federal websites. GOL was innovative in its model of web-based service delivery portals that were housed on the primary government portal, the Canada Site, and reshaped the service relationship between citizens and the Canadian government by seeking to provide access to all essential services and “repackage these service offerings in a more customer-friendly manner.”\textsuperscript{156} Canada was recognized as a global leader in e-government, predicated on GOL via the government’s main portal (then www.governmentofcanada.ca), primarily due to its focus on integrated service delivery.\textsuperscript{157} The majority of GOL, however, was primarily informational rather than transactional.\textsuperscript{158}

Service Canada, formally launched in September 2005, replaced GOL as the next phase of e-government. Building on the foundations of GOL, Service Canada (canada.ca) is a multi-channel framework for service delivery to Canadians.\textsuperscript{159} It is billed as the place for Canadians to go to access the programs, services, and benefits they need from the GC and its many partners—via the internet, telephone, in-person, or on social media platforms.

When measured in terms of e-commerce criteria of service delivery, speed, convenience, and breadth of access to government departments’ services, GOL and its successor Service Canada can be regarded as generally successful. However, while these


\textsuperscript{156} Brown 2007; Dutil et al. 2011, \textit{The Service State}, 16.


\textsuperscript{158} Roy 2006.

\textsuperscript{159} Roy 2006; Small 2012, “Canadian Government’s Use of Twitter.”
programs have worked to increase citizen access to government services and to information about these services, lauding them in other areas may be premature. The model of “citizen-as-consumer” has the potential to replace a more substantively defined model of Canadian citizenship. This is despite Canadians’ preferred choice of citizen (48%) over client (16%) or customer (13%), as reported in a GC survey.

While the arguments of a more transparent and open government accompany the statistics of citizen use of GC websites, it is difficult to determine whether citizens actually received greater access to the information they sought. The design of the early online citizen portals failed to address the needs of citizens seeking a more in-depth interrogation and contestation of such programs and services, with government policies and structures supporting the “deeply entrenched habits of secrecy and cost recovery policies which discourage citizens from seeking information.” This criticism of a culture of secrecy was echoed by Canadian public administration scholar Jeffrey Roy through his observations that the Canadian federal government embraces the internet as a platform for openness in controlled ways, such as through service provision; however, it resists demands and opportunities for transparency that may appear to be threatening or destabilizing.

\[160\] Roy 2012, “Secrecy Versus Openness.”
\[162\] EKOS 2006, Awareness Baseline Study.
\[164\] Longford 2002, 35.
2.4.1.1 E-Government in Canada: Information and Recordkeeping

Information is key to e-government, yet it is at the root of its greatest challenges. A significant component of GOL was updating the GC’s *Management of Government Information Policy*, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) policy instrument that provides the framework for information (and records) management procedures and practices throughout the public sector. This policy provides administrative direction for the life cycle management of government information, as well as information storage, access and transmission in a networked environment. Information management was viewed as a “central element of the agenda of all the major GOL-related interdepartmental committees,” with the national Librarian and Archivist designated to champion information management on the TBS Advisory Committee, Information Management Subcommittee.

While information management was integral to GOL and the subsequent phases of e-government in Canada, survey and interview data gathered from investigating GOL indicates that information management was consistently cited as of greatest concern to public servants. David Brown stresses the “weakness” of electronic record keeping in the GC, particularly the “uneven integration between electronic and paper records management,” in administering access to information requests and its balance with privacy protection. These requests put considerable strain on government information management and highlight

---

168 Brown 2007, 60.
information and recordkeeping issues in GC information in relation to e-government. Brown goes on to make linkages to policy instruments:

Notwithstanding these linkages and the central importance of information and knowledge management to the knowledge economy and society, and therefore the digital state, the management of information and related technologies in the federal government has been less integrated and cohesive—operating in a less mature policy and institutional environment—than the management of the other major assets of public administration, financial and human resources, and the physical assets of the state.  

Almost a decade later, not much had changed. “Preparing Government for the Data and Information Needs of the 21st Century,” a report resulting from a consultation between public servants, academia, and government consultants, identifies challenges and/or barriers in the GC information management landscape. The report surfaced the difficulties of “reconciling a digital culture with the Westminster system.” Noting barriers to information management reform, including the culture in the public service that prioritized technology over the importance of information management, the report suggests treating information in the GC as a “strategic asset.”

2.4.1.2 Government 2.0

In December 2013, the GC embarked on initiatives to advance a program of e-government that includes a Web Renewal Action Plan and Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government (CAPOG). The Web Renewal Initiative “aimed to improve effectiveness of the GC’s web presence by streamlining and consolidating online information and services under the

173 Institute on Governance 2014, 6.
Canada.ca portal.”174 Led by the TBS, the Web Renewal Initiative encompassed a number of actions that focused on government services concentrating on search, access, and use.175 The single, “user-centric” Canada.ca website organized around themes and the most frequently used information and services, with Service Canada acting as the “principal publisher,” managing a distributed web publishing model.176 The Canada.ca site only contains “active Web content” while older content is archived. CAPOG includes three “streams of activity”: open information, open data, and open dialogue.177 The GC has made a number of commitments on CAPOG, including that of “providing information [as] the ‘default’ approach in making government data and information available to Canadians” and “engaging Canadians through modern Web 2.0 tools.”178

Criticism in the literature of the next phase of e-government, what is commonly referred to as Gov 2.0,179 include the identification of frictions between new technologies and existing governance models and cultures, insufficient or absent management and preservation of government information, lack of analytical support or sound measures regarding implementation efforts, and an absence of access to information beyond the level of delivery of services.180 As Roy points out, the “ethos” of Gov 2.0 is underpinned by greater openness, participatory mechanisms and moves towards collective intelligence and

175 Canada, TBS 2014.
176 Canada, TBS 2014.
179 Roy 2012, “Secrecy Versus Openness.”
more collaborative forms of governance that are often less hierarchical in their nature. He argues that while governments are speaking about embracing such changes, such actions require “significant structural and cultural shifts”:

The potential recasting of governance in terms of expectations and roles is profound. Rather than gathering information and ideas via highly regimented and contained mechanisms (shaped by a proprietary mindset), this alternative presentation of openness and ideas begins from the premise that the ownership of information and ideas is fundamentally diffused and shared. At the same time, however, such an ethos of openness invariably faces strong pushback from both traditions of proprietary protection and its organizational cousin that is particularly prevalent in the public sector—namely hierarchical and informational control.

Roy argues that the “inward and control-oriented setting” is typical of a Westminster model of governance as expressed in the Canadian federal system. This model has played out in Canada as secretive and defensive regarding communications and has revealed a culture of containment when it comes to information.

These approaches to information, argues Roy, also shape the practices of public servants. While the uptake of new social media technologies by GC public servants facilitates a less hierarchical information flow, evidence suggests that social media practices take place within a public service environment that privileges a hierarchical information and policy framework. A study based on interviews with public servants from across Canadian federal and provincial governments notes that “the most significant impediment to

---

182 Roy 2014, 416.
184 Roy 2012, “Secrecy Versus Openness.”
185 See, for example: Roy; Fyfe and Crookall 2010, Public Sector Policy Dilemmas; University of Saskatchewan 2012, Social Media and Governance 2.0; Mergel 2012, Using Twitter in Government.
government use of social media is the ‘clay layer’ in management and the hierarchical public service culture’—“government has not adapted to the promise of new media to liberate information, foster collaboration and openness, and promote organizational change.”¹⁸⁶

One of the greatest barriers to collaboration and adoption of social media tools in the Canadian government is the proprietary mindset government has with regard to information ownership and control—“social media demand a new paradigm regarding the ownership, use, and management of information.”¹⁸⁷ While the “development of a culture of public information sharing appears to be a significant outcome of Web 2.0 in the United States, Australia, and Britain,” “this is not the case in Canada, especially at the federal level.”¹⁸⁸

Kathleen McNutt and Jeffrey Roy highlight the hindrances to Gov 2.0 in the Canadian system, specifically the GC’s 2012 CAPOG.¹⁸⁹ McNutt argues that public administrators need to recognize that influence in the Web 2.0 environment is “earned through social reputation, not bureaucratic authority,” and that the most significant barriers to social media adoption within public administration are not technological, but organizational, cultural, and legal.¹⁹⁰ Roy states that the GC’s organizational and administrative architecture embedded in the Canadian Westminster model is a “particularly egregious example of centralized and control-minded information management,” one that limits the realization of its Gov 2.0 goals.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Fyfe and Crookall 2010, 3.
¹⁸⁷ Fyfe and Crookall 2010; Roy 2016, “Data, Dialogue, and Innovation.”
¹⁸⁸ Fyfe and Crookall 2010, 12.
¹⁹⁰ McNutt 2014, 67.
The command-and-control approach to information management in the federal government was highlighted when, in 2014, the Canadian media reported on internal Industry Canada documents, obtained through the Access to Information Act, that revealed a 12-step process for approving tweets that required numerous approvals for each tweet, including from the minister’s or junior minister’s own offices. The tweeting protocol revealed a process that was rigid and found to be “frustrating” on the part of public servants. Research into the official federal government use of Twitter shows an approach to an information and service delivery model that takes little or no advantage of the interactive affordances of Web 2.0 technologies, with “attempts at democratization [being] both exceptional and superficial.”

Similar concerns were raised as e-government goals came to be expressed through the international open government movement. Of the three pillars of CAPOG—open data, open information, and open dialogue—Roy argues that only “open data” has seen real action. Research indicates that a shift in organizational structure is required to achieve effective Gov 2.0 results—results that, Roy argues, are present in the private sector, which has witnessed success with innovating with web 2.0 technologies. However, “the challenge for government is much more complex and lies in creating new spaces for innovation and

---

experimentation within deeply embedded structures, most of which have been predicated
[on] limited openness and strong degrees of hierarchical control.”\textsuperscript{196} The “traditional top-
down and control-laden structures of Westminster-stylized governance” that manifest in the
central agencies such as the TBS and Privy Council Office (PCO) are poorly positioned to
develop outward and collaborative forms of governance.\textsuperscript{197}

Yet Fyfe and Crookall’s study observes that “there is a strong appetite for a
community of practice to discuss common issues and to develop shared solutions to meet the
opportunities that social media are offering governments within the limits required of public
sector organizations.”\textsuperscript{198} Canadian public administration scholar Amanda Clarke notes the
“impressive advances” made by Canadian federal public servants internally as they
experiment with web 2.0 technologies in attempts to test the “siloed” bureaucratic
information culture in the GC.\textsuperscript{199} Working outside of the formal structures of government,
Clarke observes that this “vibrant online and offline community” of public servants is
facilitating grassroots, bottom-up reform within the bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{200} Beginning as early as
2008 with the development and launch of GCPedia, the federal government’s internal wiki,
this bottom up approach began to take root.\textsuperscript{201} As Clarke notes, “with GCPedia, for the first
time, any civil servants with access to the government’s intranet could, in theory, access,

\textsuperscript{196} Roy 2016, 32.
\textsuperscript{197} Roy 2016.
\textsuperscript{198} Fyfe and Crookall 2010, Public Sector Policy Dilemmas, 3.
\textsuperscript{199} Clarke 2014, “Bottom-Up Reform,” 125.
\textsuperscript{200} Clarke 2014.
\textsuperscript{201} GCPedia is a federal government wiki, accessible only via the GC’s internal servers and
accessible to all its public servants.
comment on, and edit the same information simultaneously, and with relative ease.” In 2009, this community began tweeting with the hashtag #w2p, an identifier for public servants’ discourse around web 2.0 and its use in government. Clarke’s analysis of #w2p showed it to be a way this grassroots movement of public servants could organize and share information on new technologies and public service reform. As Clarke states, 2013 saw institutional movement in this area with two initiatives led by the Clerk of the Privy Council: Blueprint 2020 and the Deputy Ministers’ Committee on Social Media and Policy Development. These initiatives had a strong emphasis on external online collaboration, and while grounded in more traditional models of engagement, engagement techniques such as Twitter discussions and information sharing via web 2.0 platforms have become central components of these initiatives.

The Information Commissioner of Canada, Suzanne Legault, addressed access to information issues regarding information generated with emerging ICTs, namely instant messaging, in her 2013 report, *Access to Information at Risk from Instant Messaging*. The

---

203 Androsoff 2015, “Wither #w2p?”; Charney 2015, “Gentrification of #w2p.” “#w2p,” standing for web 2.0 practitioners, was one of the first widespread online communities of public servants in the social media era, first launching in 2009. It used the #w2p hashtag on Twitter combined with regular in-person happy-hour-type events to build a community of Canadian federal public servants (and some non-governmental folks as well) interested in online technology, innovation, and public sector reform. Unique for government, it was a completely grassroots and organic network. Members organized a “Collaborative Culture Camp Series,” a number of “un-conferences” starting in 2010; this work was featured in the Privy Council Office’s 2011 *Annual Report to the Prime Minister*, 13.
204 Clarke 2014, “Bottom-Up Reform.”
205 These initiatives are further discussed in the analysis phase of this dissertation in chapters four and five.
206 Clarke 2014, “Bottom-Up Reform.”
Information Commissioner’s office conducted research into government agencies’ use of instant messaging and its implications for access. The findings revealed that there were insufficient mechanisms in place to ensure that the information and potential records generated when public servants use their Blackberries for instant messaging are adequately addressed from an information management perspective.207

The development of e-government and Government 2.0 in Canada has surfaced opportunities and frictions that are only beginning to be investigated. A number of public administration scholars have drawn attention to the strains between the rhetoric of Government 2.0 and its manifestation within a Westminster government model—specifically, the contradictions between claims of an open information model and the reality of hierarchical command-and-control information systems. These policy and information challenges are discussed further in chapter five.

2.5 Government and Social Media: Information, Recordkeeping, and Archives

The latest tools in the e-government toolkit, social media, have been adopted by governments and individual public servants in carrying out functions, enacting social media in daily practices—both formally and informally.208 Social media adoption by government can present innovative opportunities by opening new channels for communication, information

207 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, Access to Information at Risk.
The promise of social media adoption in government is one of “collaboration, accessibility, and decentralization.” However, these values are not necessarily adopted within the existing bureaucratic structures and can be particularly challenging to existing information, records, and policy frameworks.

Information and records management, collection and preservation, ethical and privacy issues, and policy development are consistently cited in the literature as issues related to the government use of these emerging technologies. As Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen note:

Social media technologies raise a large number of information management issues, primarily in the areas of privacy, security, accuracy, and preservation, spanning major issues such as personally identifiable information, security of government data and information, and the accuracy of publicly available data. By adopting the use of specific social media tools, government agencies appear to be tacitly endorsing the privacy, security, and other policies employed by those social media providers as adequate.

Researchers have drawn attention to the paradox that the affordances often extolled as strengths of social media technologies are also the ones that contribute to some of the toughest challenges these media currently present:

The strength of social media technologies lies in their ability to create an immediate dialog through an interactive forum. This also foreshadows a decreasing chance of maintaining a permanent and final “document” to manage and archive data.

---


210 University of Saskatchewan 2012, 2.

211 See, for example: EU, European Commission 2008, Web 2.0 in Government; Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen 2012, “Government Social Media.”

212 See, for example: Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen 2012; University of Saskatchewan 2012, Social Media and Governance 2.0; Mergel 2012, Using Twitter in Government.

Moreover, use of third-party applications and software that reside on nongovernmental information systems raises significant issues.\textsuperscript{214} While there is a widespread recognition of the potential of these technologies to shift government information practices, engage citizens, and provide increased transparency,\textsuperscript{215} social media practices and understanding the challenges these practices potentially pose are still at a nascent stage.

Exploratory literature examining social media use in government surfaces challenges posed by records generated with emerging technologies such as social media (e.g. difficulties determining what to capture, recognition of the need to capture, and technical challenges of how to capture).\textsuperscript{216} Much of the literature focuses attention on a limited set of best practices and providing guidance drawn from small-scale, short-term case studies, with larger-scale practical solutions still a challenge.\textsuperscript{217} The majority of these indicate that government agencies are finding social media challenging and are grappling with managing it effectively.\textsuperscript{218} Described early as a “tipping point,”\textsuperscript{219} record-making and -keeping in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{214} Bertot et al. 2010, “Government Transparency,” 58.
\item \textsuperscript{215} See, for example: Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen 2012, “Government Social Media.”
\item \textsuperscript{217} Stoks 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{218} See, for example: Australia, Department of Finance, Government 2.0 Taskforce 2009, \textit{Getting on with Government 2.0}; Lips and Rapson 2009, \textit{Emerging Records Management}; USA, NARA 2010, \textit{Federal Web 2.0 Use} and 2013, “Managing Social Media Records.”
\item \textsuperscript{219} See, for example: Cumming and Findlay 2010, “Digital Recordkeeping”; Canada, LAC 2010, \textit{Web 2.0 and Recordkeeping}.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
contexts of emerging and continually shifting ICTs, particularly social media, has a number of archival scholars calling for a rethinking of theory and practice.  

2.5.1 Digital Preservation and Social Media

The preservation and curation of social media has proven to be a difficult and ongoing challenge for archives and the digital preservation community. While the immediate and long-term value of social media content is being recognized, this content challenges traditional web-archiving techniques. Unlike more traditional websites with more static and stable content, social media data are streams of activity, possessing any number of complex interactive elements that are often hidden from the front end. As information scholars Acker and Kriesberg highlight, the complexity of current social media platforms and the proprietary nature of their data models, with their mobile friendly app design and ability to facilitate likes, follower counts, reposts, etc., have proven challenging for web archiving and lack completeness. As Acker and Kriesberg note, “if you download your personal Twitter archive, it is only a snapshot of your feed at the time of capture.”

---

220 See, for example: Cumming and Findlay 2010; Canada, LAC 2010; Bailey 2008, Rethinking Records Management; Gilliland 2014, “Reconceptualizing Records.”
224 Acker and Kriesberg 2017, 4.
Challenges to preserving social media content include socio-technical issues related to acquiring, preserving and making accessible social media content.225 Issues such as technical infrastructures, privacy, ownership, access, reuse, ethical considerations, policy, intellectual property, and legal requirements are consistently raised amongst information and preservation scholars.226

In April 2010, the Library of Congress and Twitter announced an agreement giving the Library all public tweets from the inception of Twitter in March 2006 through April 2010, as well as all future public tweets, on an ongoing basis.227 The Library of Congress’s Twitter archive, officially known as the Twitter Research Access project, made explicit the multifaceted challenges of preserving social media content.228 Subsequent updates to the status of the Library of Congress Twitter archive have highlighted the complexity of archiving social media content, with a shift in collection mandate and no sign on the horizon of public access to the archive.229 As NARA itself reported, “as the complexity of social

228 Scola 2015; Zimmer 2015.
media becomes greater, the ability to capture and preserve content will also become more complex.” 230

Information ethics and privacy scholar Michael Zimmer identifies what he sees as the challenges preventing the archives from being made publicly available. 231 Focusing on practice and policy, Zimmer highlights a variety of issues echoed elsewhere in the literature, including how to process and organize these tweets, physically store the data, and provide access and retrieval. 232 Zimmer highlights concerns including appropriate access controls, the potential censoring or restricting of information, and ethical considerations of “the very existence of such an archive.” 233 Even the Library of Congress with its large resources has yet to make this archives publicly available. The requirements to process this archive are vast—its immense size (still growing), the complexity of the data (over 150 metadata fields for each tweet, the need to process embedded links, shortened URLs, etc.) 234 and the contractual need to delay access to tweets for six months, 235 all contribute to the complexity.

The tools and techniques currently utilized to harvest websites are not sufficient for social media content, which, as discussed, pose more complex challenges regarding digital

230 USA, NARA 2010, Federal Web 2.0 Use, 19.
232 Zimmer 2015.
233 Zimmer 2015.
234 Zimmer 2015.
preservation.\textsuperscript{236} This poses particular issues with regard to legislated retention and disposition of records.\textsuperscript{237} As Espley et al. observe:

The traditional harvesting techniques based on parsing of the Webpages and explicit link extraction will not reliably succeed in retrieving the complete content, especially when it is dynamic and provided at the discretion of the content sources and service providers.\textsuperscript{238}

Additionally, “barriers are often in place to restrict the amount and frequency of the data that [social media platforms] let to robots or crawlers”; such limitations in dealing with dynamic content often leave social media content in archives incomplete.\textsuperscript{239} Institutions that engage in web archiving “are yet to develop common and scalable solutions for archiving systematically and providing access to social media content.”\textsuperscript{240} As archival scholars such as Bergis Jules consider the desire and need to build research collections around content shared on social media, such as the tweets and social media posts related to the 2014 killing of teenager Michael Brown (e.g. #Ferguson and #MichaelBrown), there is a desire to find ways to ensure such collections are possible: “Considering the vastness, privacy and rights issues, and complexity of how digital content is shared via social media, how do we work with this material in the context of archival principles of collection, preservation and access?”\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{236} See, for example: USA, GAO 2011, \textit{Federal Agencies Need Policies}; Hockx-Yu 2014, “Archiving Social Media.”

\textsuperscript{237} USA, NARA 2010. \textit{Federal Web 2.0 Use.}


\textsuperscript{239} Hockx-Yu 2014, “Archiving Social Media,” 3.

\textsuperscript{240} Hockx-Yu 2014.

\textsuperscript{241} Jules 2015, “Documenting the Now.”
The online environment within which social media platforms operate is increasingly personalized and platform dependent.\textsuperscript{242} Scope and context are ongoing roadblocks on the web as hyperlinks allow for an almost infinite linking of web content; thus, parameters need to be set to bound the desired content.\textsuperscript{243} While web harvesting can easily remove Twitter pages from the Twitter site and save them to another location, such capture methods are problematic for a number of reasons. Removing these digital objects from a platform such as Twitter may interfere with the understanding of their context of creation, use, and maintenance. Twitter “is not just about tweets, but about the conversation.”\textsuperscript{244} Preserving a single Twitter page only preserves one side of the conversation, and establishing the boundaries of the conversation can be problematic—does one capture all or a portion of the replies? Retweets? How about user profiles attached to the tweets and links embedded in the tweets?\textsuperscript{245} And as Espley et al. observe, legislation and policy considerations can dictate what degree of context is captured:

Where material that forms part of the public record is published on sites or services outside of government ownership the aim is to retain this part of the record without infringing the rights of the site or service provider or other users of the service. So capture and preservation is limited to material firmly in scope even if that means only one side of the ‘conversation’ is accessible in the future.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{242} Digital Preservation Coalition 2013, \textit{Web-Archiving}; Acker and Brubaker 2014, “Personal Archives.”
\textsuperscript{243} See, for example: Hockx-Yu 2014, “Archiving Social Media”; USA, GAO 2011, \textit{Federal Agencies Need Policies}.
\textsuperscript{244} Digital Preservation Coalition 2013, \textit{Web-Archiving}, 13.
\textsuperscript{245} See, for example: Digital Preservation Coalition 2013; Espley et al. 2014, “Collect, Preserve, Access.”
\textsuperscript{246} Espley et al. 2014, 34.
From 2011–2013, a pilot project was undertaken by The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA)’s Government Web Archive and the Internet Memory Foundation (IMF) to capture government records published on government Twitter and YouTube accounts. The acquisition of UK government social media records is in line with the web continuity program at TNA. It involves TNA “align[ing] its Web archiving capabilities with the way in which government is using the Web,” from working on identifying format and architecture complications to “advising the government on building a Web presence that can be preserved” and “evolving what it means to archive the Web.” Partnerships like the one between TNA and the IMF can aid memory institutions in gaining ground to build and test technical and policy frameworks for the collection and preservation of social media content.

The necessity of preserving documentary evidence is of particular concern for archives preserving social media content. As Acker and Brubaker articulate, “because the archival concern for evidence accounts for context, temporality, integrity, and events that lead to the creation of records, it emphasizes contextual description in ways that current social media platforms often leave out.” Social media content may be dispersed around the web in a variety of platforms, and the necessity for archives to “find a way to aggregate communicated information that is currently held in dispersed systems, in a way that enhances

247 Espley et al. 2014.
249 Espley et al. 2014.
251 Acker and Brubaker 2014, 15.
its value as evidence of people’s activities” is necessary to support current concepts of evidence in archival theory. Archives are struggling with the difficulties social media content pose to the ability to preserve context in support of the evidentiary capacity of the records; particularly salient is the need to identify and conserve the interrelatedness of records as manifested in the archival bond.

2.5.2 Platforms, Ownership, and Accessing Social Media

Because platforms have a role in shaping the creation of content as well as access and engagement, archives and archivists could benefit from a platform perspective that “acknowledges issues of access, context of networked profiles, and shifting policies that govern social media spaces and the content they contain.” A critique of social media platforms appears in Ian Brown and Christopher T. Marsden’s book *Regulating Code: Good Governance and Better Regulation in the Information Age*. Brown and Marsden cite the inventor of the web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, and his criticism of social networking sites (SNSs). Berners-Lee argues that the design and architecture of SNSs create “a central platform—a closed silo of content, and one that does not give you full control over your information in it. The more this kind of architecture gains widespread use, the more the Web becomes fragmented, and the less we enjoy a single, universal information space.” Digital information and internet scholar Tarleton Gillespie examines content moderation on social

media platforms and the overt and hidden decision-making that underlie the development and operation of these platforms. Gillespie scrutinizes the role of moderation on social media platforms and argues a desperate need for a “thorough public discussion about the social responsibility of platforms” is required.257 He states, “platforms constitute a fundamentally new information configuration, materially, institutionally, financially, and socially.”258 As such, applying a records management and archival lens to the role platforms play highlights their role in shaping, interpreting, and restricting information and data, which informs how their contents can be managed and preserved over time and space.

Critical information scholar Safiya Umoja Noble studies the bias search engines display, particularly with regard to race and gender. She argues that as the internet becomes increasingly commercialized and de- and un-regulated, and as it moves from a “publicly-funded, military-academic project” to a commercial enterprise, how it makes information accessible is affected. She also warns public sector information moving into corporately controlled platforms has implications for the erosion of public protections and access: “as quality information typically provided by the public sector moves into more corporate and commercial spaces, the ability of the public to ensure protections that are necessary in a democracy is eroded, due to the cost of access.”259

The ownership and control of online digital content in social media platforms is complicated by user agreements, terms and conditions, and other social/legal expectations.

257 Gillespie 2018, Custodians of the Internet, 206.
258 Gillespie 2018, 207.
and obligations. Individuals often do not own what they post on these platforms so may not have control over its preservation and/or reuse. Terms of service, which often change without notice, may not allow for the donation of such materials by the platform creators/owners. As a result, content generated in social media platforms challenge traditional models of archival and legal deposit and may affect ongoing access and use.

Information and policy scholars have also drawn attention to the issues surrounding platforms and public access to government information in social media sites:

Using YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Second Life, or other social media sites to disseminate government information has the unusual characteristic of creating government information that is dependent on the existence of an external company. As a result, the information is designed for a particular site, a site that controls the means of distribution and materials disturbed through the site. Government agencies that use these sites to make information available are relying on the continued existence of the sites—and the continued ability of the government to use the sites—to ensure that the information will be available in the long-term.

Social media records residing in third-party environments make it difficult for government agencies to control the contents of these applications to effectively carry out records management functions, including capture and maintenance, retention, and long-term preservation or destruction of records, privacy protection, and access.

See, for example: Marshall and Shipman 2014 and 2012; Zimmer 2015.
Marshall and Shipman 2014, “Archiving Facebook.”
2.5.3 Privacy Issues

Considerations of the use of social media are redefining privacy and problematizing issues in the context of technology use, collection, preservation, and access. Problematizing the perceived dichotomy between public and private, scholars are arguing for a more situated and contextualized approach, one which may be particularly useful in navigating online content. Archival scholars such as Anne Gilliland argue for conceptualizing records generated in environments such as social media as multi-provenance bureaucratic records or records created by the crowd. Gilliland states that the “dominant archival conceptualization of provenance fails to acknowledge the complex of parties that are often responsible for or participate in the creation of a record.” Despite the complex challenges born-networked, multi-provenancial records pose to archival arrangement and description practices, it is an issue that cannot be ignored. While the internet operates trans globally, in an online environment concepts of private and public may be diverse and attention to the local, regional, and cultural may be required to avoid violations of privacy.

Privacy protection in the context of online government records may present particular obstacles. Online postings considered “private” within an online circle of individuals could make their way into government records potentially challenging expectations of online privacy, for example. The aggregation of social media datasets may result in the

267 See, for example: Nissenbaum 2009, Privacy in Context; Small 2012.
269 Association of Internet Researchers 2012, Ethical Decision-Making; Small 2012.
unintended breaches of security and/or privacy. As institutions and individuals grapple with these issues, pragmatic experimentation may take place. In attempting to preserve its many blogs, the Smithsonian takes a conservative approach to potentially breaching individual privacy. In appraising social media, the Smithsonian’s approach ranges from the capture of minimal user profile information to the account to decisions not to capture if they feel too much personal information would be disclosed.

In a 2013 Canadian study by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, the Information Commissioner of Canada highlighted four areas of privacy protection in social media platforms that most concerned her office: accountability, meaningful consent, limiting use, and retention. Citizens are also concerned with the ability of public institutions who preserve social media to also ensure that the privacy rights of platform users are protected. Debates regarding privacy erupted after the Library of Congress announced it would be preserving all public tweets. These concerns are not without merit with 40–50 percent of tweets containing identity information.

---

272 Wright 2012, “Social Media.”
273 Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics 2013, Privacy and Social Media.
274 See, for example: Zimmer 2010, “Research in Facebook” and “Harvest Public Twitter Accounts.”
2.5.4 **Ethical Issues**

Ethics is the subject of substantial discourse in internet studies, and their relevance regarding social media technologies is briefly introduced here. Internet scholar Nancy Baym highlights the corporate grounding of SNSs, drawing attention to a need to problematize the shift from socializing in “not-for-profit spaces to proprietary profit driven environments.”\(^{276}\) As SNSs “become practical necessities for many in sustaining social lives, we become increasingly beholden to corporate entities whose primary responsibility is to their shareholders, not their users.”\(^{277}\)

Writing in the context of the Canadian public administration, public administration scholar Kenneth Kernaghan argues for research into how values and ethics regimes in public organizations take into account the impacts of IT and what role they can play in addressing the implications of these technologies: “value conflicts and dilemmas arising from advances in digital technologies argue for vigorous measures to alert public servants to the technologies’ impact.”\(^{278}\) Ethical considerations must be made in the collection, preservation and accessing of social media content.

The collection and preservation of public social media content may infringe upon users’ privacy rights. Users engaging with government social media accounts on third party systems may not be aware of the potential for data tracking or research.\(^{279}\) For example, Twitter users who have the ability to delete individual tweets from their timeline and as a

---

\(^{276}\) Baym 2011, “Social Networks 2.0,” 399.
\(^{277}\) Baym 2011, 399.
\(^{279}\) Zimmer 2010, “Research in Facebook” and “Harvest Public Twitter Accounts.”
consequence from the timelines of the accounts they follow, Twitter search results, as well as any unaltered retweets, may find their tweets preserved by the Library of Congress or preserved by other archives.280

As social media is increasingly used for social activism and mobilization in aid of open public discourse, socially aware archivists are rushing to experiment with collecting content from emerging ICTs such as Twitter and mobile devices in attempts to preserve the public record.281 However, as we are still in the nascent stages of these web-based technologies and understanding their nuances, often thought of as ephemeral by users, potentially preserved for posterity by public (or private) institutions. A university archivist who was quick to collect public tweets in the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (#Ferguson) for fear of them disappearing, found himself in such an ethical dilemma. After amassing over 13 million tweets, a data mining company whose clients included the US Department of Defense came calling. Mixing the political and the personal, as well as possible personally identifiable information, the ethics of creating such an archives are complex.282 The archivist in this case chose to wait a year prior to making the tweets public, however, perhaps just a band aid solution as much of the ethical and privacy questions still remain unanswered and in need of exploration in relation to long-term preservation and access.

280 Zimmer 2015, “Twitter Archive.”
If governments are committed to using third-party social media platforms for citizen engagement, information dissemination, communication, and potential records generation, a robust examination of the value regimes that underpin these technologies and the ethical implications of their use is required.

2.6 Summary

As demonstrated by the literature reviewed, the emergence of web 2.0 technologies broadly, and social media in particular, surfaces challenges in archival science, records management practices, and e-government and information policy. Particularly, social media use in service to e-government has focused attention on the need to examine the effectiveness of existing policy instruments and information practices in safeguarding privacy, security, and access, and ensuring long-term preservation of government-citizen information. Much of the e-government research to date has focused on government-citizen engagement, technology adoption, and innovation. While research has drawn attention to the need to examine information and records management and information policy in light of these emerging technologies, little empirical research exists that directly seeks to understand the

283 See, for example: Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2012, “Transparency and Accountability.”
284 See, for example: Small 2012, “Canadian Government’s Use of Twitter.”
287 See, for example: ARMA 2011, Social Networks.
interaction between social media practices, the information products their use generates, and the information policies that govern both practice and products in relation to recordkeeping.

The research described in the next chapters seeks to address the gap in understanding how government agencies and how those who work within these agencies are incorporating social media in their work related information practices, how they view and manage the information generated, and how they engage with the policies that govern this use. It is particularly important to gain an understanding of these phenomena in unique contexts, such as the Canadian federal government, as the increased use of these technologies by public servants and government agencies ensures they are destined to become a part of the historical records of government.
Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the dissertation research design, including the methodological framework. It explains the selection of the case study and research participants, as well as the data sources used in the study, and describes the methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter introduces the practice lens employed for data analysis and interpretation, situating it within the broader landscape of archives and recordkeeping research.

The philosophical worldview held by a researcher influences the practice of the research and the analysis of the outcomes; as such, identification of the views held by a researcher facilitates greater transparency for the reader.288 Gray advises beginning with a consideration of epistemology as to whether or not one is seeking objective “truth” or whether one believes the real world cannot be so easily measured.289 Drawing on this insight, I ground my work in an interpretivist perspective, attempting to understand the complexity of phenomena through the meanings assigned by individuals.290 As Charmaz states:

Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world. Researchers and research participants make assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses, and pursue purposes that influence their respective views and actions in the presence of each other.291

As this study is concerned with the implications of emerging social media practices for record generation, recordkeeping, and policy generation, my work was guided by a practice

289 Gray 2014, Research in the Real World.
291 Charmaz 2014, Grounded Theory, 15.
theory approach, and I employed an interpretivist case study methodology. Components of the theoretical framework for this study include concepts and principles from information science and archival studies. Utilizing “principles and practices” from a grounded theory methodology, as exemplified by Charmaz, pairs well with a case study and practice approach.

A practice lens offers a generative means for understanding situations as being made up of practices (that a researcher defines as relevant and useful to the inquiry). A practice approach takes practices as the basic unit of analysis (e.g. the organized sets of doings and sayings or the resources and procedures that produce mutually understood situations), including artefacts, embodied activities, and the historical and social conditions within which processes take place.292

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative research can aid in exploring and better understanding the meaning that individuals and groups ascribe to social problems and can be particularly helpful when little is known about a particular issue and good “thick” description is needed beforehand.293 Such a research process can utilize emerging questions and procedures, data usually collected in the participants’ setting, and inductive data analysis that builds from particular to general themes with the researcher interpreting meaning from the data.294 This study is exploratory in that it seeks to gain a preliminary understanding of the emerging practices of social media use by public servants and agencies in the GC.

293 Geertz 1973, Interpretation of Cultures.
294 Creswell 2009, Research Design.
3.2 Situating a Research Perspective

A general orientation or worldview is a basic set of beliefs that guide action. One’s worldview, informed by the discipline in which one situates oneself, research experiences, and external research influences, all contribute to shaping the methods and procedures chosen in the research undertaken.

Unlike positivist or post-positivist perspectives that hold that causes determine effects or outcomes and support methods of inquiry drawing on the natural sciences, the ontological positions of interpretivism and practice theory contest propositions that categories such as organization and culture are pre-given and assert that categories of social phenomena are constructed by social actors. I agree with Charmaz’s interpretation of constructivism, which:

Assumes the existence of an obdurate, real world that may be interpreted in multiple ways. I do not subscribe to the radical subjectivism assumed by some advocates of constructivism. Consistent with Marx, I assume that people make their worlds but do not make them as they please. Rather, worlds are constructed under particular historical and social conditions that shape our views, actions, and collective practices.

Taking all participants’ views seriously leads the researcher to seek complexity of views instead of narrowing of categories. A practice lens, coupled with methods such as open-ended interview questions, can aid the researcher in understanding how individuals

298 See, for example, Bryman 2008; Lincoln and Guba 1985, *Naturalistic Inquiry*.
negotiate and construct meaning socially through interactions with others, activities, and
non-human agents; “the researcher’s intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings
others have about the world.” 301 Context also plays a key role, as it is necessary for me to
understand participants’ historical and cultural settings and for me, as the researcher, to
position myself within the research to make clear the role of my own personal, cultural, and
historical experiences in interpretation. 302

3.3 Tenets of a Practice Approach

As stated in the introduction, this study draws upon some tenets of practice theory as
articulated by several well-known social theorists and organizational studies scholars. The
work of Theodore Schatzki, Andreas Reckwitz, and Elizabeth Shove in philosophy and
social theory; 303 in organizational studies, the work of Martha Feldman, Wanda Orlikowski,
Silvia Gherardi, Davide Nicolini, and Pedro Monteiro; 304 Alan Warde and Daniel Welch in
the area of culture and consumption; 305 and Andrew Cox, Ard Huizing, and Mary Cavanagh
in information science. 306 The turn to practice theory across disciplines, particularly in the
social sciences, has seen continual uptake since the early part of the twenty-first century,

301 Creswell 2009, 8.
302 Creswell 2009.
303 Schatzki 2001, “Introduction: Practice Theory” and 2002, Site of the Social; Reckwitz
of Social Practice.
Technology” and 2010, “Practice in Research”; Gherardi 2009, “Practice Lens” and 2017,
“Practice Theory”; Nicolini and Monteiro 2017, “Practice Approach.”
306 Cox 2012, “Practice Approach” and 2012 “Social Practice”; Huizing and Cavanagh 2011,
“Contemporary Practice Theory.”
often referred to as a re-turn to practice.307 As Cox states, there is a “broad church” of views when it comes to practice theory; however, while there is not a single unified theory of practice, there are commonalities and shared elements of practice that continually surface in applications of a practice theory approach. What unifies practice theory is a set of “ontological and epistemological arguments that place social and organizational practices” at the centre of analysis.308

3.3.1 Emphasis Between Authors

Schatzki’s work situates practice theory and practices within broader social theories. The “social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings.”309 For Schatzki, integrated practices are central—a “temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings linked by practical understandings, rules, teleo-affective structure and general understanding,” inclusive of humans, artefacts, organisms, and things.310 As Cox states, for Schatzki “it is about actions and socially given (if renegotiable) meanings, knowledge, and expectations.”311 There exists an indeterminate set of relationships linking these entities, which gain meaning from their

307 The publication of Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny’s Practice Turn in 2001 spurred a re-turn to a practice approach in the social sciences and organization studies research. See, for example: Huizing and Cavanagh 2011, “Contemporary Practice Theory”; Cox 2012, “Practice Approach.”
310 Schatzki 2002, Site of the Social, 87. “Teleoaffective formations are configurations across multiple practices that enjoin those practices to common ends, ordering their affective engagements and offering general understandings through which participants make sense of the projects they pursue.” Welch 2017, “Consumer Culture,” 1.
position within a vast, complex, and changing nexus of social practices. Individuals operate within an environment of practices with expectations and an accountability of shared performative actions. The roles of non-humans and their agency in directing practices—or what Orlikowski and others refer to as sociomateriality—are important for Schatzki for their part in “forming and stabilizing human worlds.”

For Reckwitz, practices are “routinized” and consist of interdependencies between diverse elements. A practice as a “temporally and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” is understandable to both those who carry it out and potential observers of the practice who are within the same culture. It is a “routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.” Reckwitz stresses the routine or everydayness of social practices and the interdependencies between diverse elements: body/mind, things, knowledge, discourse/language, structure/purpose, and the agent/individual.

For Warde, practices are “internally differentiated and dynamic.” The existence of a variety of competencies and capabilities informs the differences in how practices are enacted. Drawing on key components of Schatzki’s nexus linking doings and sayings...
(understandings, procedures, and engagements), Warde suggests these vary independently of one another and between groups of participants. Individuals vary in understanding, skills, and goals, and the relationship between them also varies. With individuals likely learning each of these components in different ways, we would benefit from examining “how understandings, procedures, and values of engagement are each acquired and then adapted to performances.” For example, an agent’s capacity, from professional or amateur, visionary or follower, highly knowledgeable or relatively ignorant, etc., is relevant to understanding an individual’s role or the structure of their position in any given practice. Practices as understood from this perspective are temporally situated and ever evolving.

The adoption of a practice approach has seen some uptake in information science, specifically within archives and recordkeeping research. Scholars such as Cox, Huizing, and Cavanagh in information science and Ivanov in archives and recordkeeping have put forward arguments for its utility for research in these areas. For Cox, the strength of a practice approach is in its grasp of the context of social life without it being the sole indicator, ensuring that individual actions count while also making room for change and contingency. A practice approach closely examines the “concrete things people do and say

318 Warde 2005, 139.
319 Warde 2005.
within a set of inter-related activities and the material resources and arrangements that go with them.” Practice theory is both about the physical as well as the “performative nature” of speech and contextually specific to a practice. It facilitates a focus on social expectations and social identity, on materiality and embodiment, and on routine and change. Huizing and Cavanagh’s conceptualization of a practice approach includes acknowledging the active agency of material objects, stretching the definition of social interaction to incorporate both human and non-human agency and actions, prioritizing actions and practices over actors and organizations, understanding knowledge as primarily constituted within practice, and using practice as an interpretive lens with which to study organizational settings.

Shove, Pantzar, and Watson identified practice approach as a means of exploring processes of transformation and stability within and between social practices—identifying elements of practice as competencies, meanings, and materials. They stress the potential of a practice approach for understanding change, stating that “practices emerge, persist, shift, and disappear when connections between elements … are made, sustained or broken.”

The application of a practice approach in organizational studies underscores the significance of studying both the individual and collective nature of situated practices, as well as non-human agents (e.g. discursive, material, technological), that may manifest in

---

323 Cox 2012, 63.
324 Cox 2012.
325 Cox 2012, “Practice Approach.”
326 Huizing and Cavanagh 2011, “Contemporary Practice Theory.”
documents, technologies, spaces, artefacts, etc.  

For Orlikowski, a practice lens for the study of technology in organizational settings facilitates studying the recursive and emergent nature of agents’ situated use of technologies.  

Orlikowski labels the “sets of rules and resources that are re-constituted in people’s recurrent engagement with technologies” as “technologies-in-practice.”  

Because a practice lens focuses on the structures that emerge as individuals interact recurrently with technologies—“built-in, added on, modified, or invented on the fly”—it better accommodates situated use of technologies, with no assumptions regarding that technology’s stability, predictability, or relative completeness.  

A contribution of Orlikowski’s approach is its move away from technological determinism in examining technologies and its move towards human agency and the role of recurrent enactment in shaping technologies and their uses.  

Feldman and Orlikowski situate a practice lens via three avenues: an empirical focus, which examines how individuals act in organizations, recognizing their “centrality in organizational outcomes”; a theoretical focus, which looks at the relations between individual actions and the structuring of social life seeking to articulate the relationships between everyday activities, their generation, and operation in different contexts; and a philosophical focus, which posits that practices are the “building blocks” of social reality.  


329 Orlikowski 2000.  


331 Orlikowski 2000.  

Critical to a practice approach for Feldman and Orlikowski is the “relationship between specific instances of situated action and the social world in which the action takes place.”

3.3.2 Tenets of a Practice Theory Lens

A number of commonalities for a practice approach are recurrent within the work of the scholars discussed above. I have drawn upon some of these in the examination, analysis, and discussion of the literature and data for this study. These tenets include:

- Rejecting dualism: Opposing the division of objects and subjects, mind and body, etc., instead observing their coexistence in social and organizational life—practices as embodied activities;
- Materiality: The importance of materiality in the production of social life and the active agency attributed to non-human agents. Practices highlight the important and active role of material objects and systems in social interactions;
- Interaction incorporates human and non-human agents and actions: Interaction should also include the relations with organizations, institutions and their mediating artifacts such as policies, standards, etc.;
- Reproductive of the social: What goes on in practices contributes to maintain practices;

333 Feldman and Orlikowski 2011.
334 Huizing and Cavanagh 2011, “Contemporary Practice Theory.”
Knowledge is often established within practices: Knowledge is at least partly constructed in practice, in interactions with participating objects and subjects; practices are rooted in bodily skills and related to language and tacit knowledge;\textsuperscript{338} 

Interconnected practices / interdependencies between diverse elements: Highly flexible and dynamic sets of situated actions and practices (e.g. knots, networks, nexuses, assemblages)—the social and material nature of practices are situated in time and space, comprise inconsistencies and tensions, and allow for collective and individual agency.\textsuperscript{339} Practices depend on the activities that make them up as well as the conditions in which they unfold;\textsuperscript{340} 

Socially recognized and named sets of activities oriented towards ends (e.g. “doings and sayings,” “tasks,” “projects”): While open-ended, practices are activities that gain sense when organized around an end or object;\textsuperscript{341} 

Generative of rules and norms: Practices generate rules and norms.

3.4 Positioning a Practice Lens

My choice to use a practice approach is further predicated on three assumptions:

1. The importance of being able to hold government accountable through records;

\textsuperscript{339} Huizing and Cavanagh 2011.
\textsuperscript{341} Nicolini and Monteiro 2017; Schatzki 2002, Site of the Social.
2. The challenges that arise as government actors shift their practices to leverage the affordances of an emerging system (e.g. social media) influence long-term accountability;

3. The complexity of the influence that social media practices have in a government setting requires an approach that is both rigorous and generative.

The core tenets of a practice approach enable me to avoid binaries and view practices as embodied activities, considering the active and relevant role played by non-human mediating artefacts, including technologies, policies, etc. A practice lens supports the examination of interconnected and complex practices, how they are situated in time and space, the presence of inconsistencies and pressures, and the role of individual and/or collective agency. As an interpretive lens, a practice approach aids in making sense of “doing, knowing, and organizing,”342 which is particularly relevant to the study at hand. A practice approach can aid in analyzing how concepts of records generation and information policies are understood and manifested in daily practices.

The ability for a practice approach to consider the macro and micro is another of the strengths of its application in this study. A practice approach can provide “an interpretive lens from which observers can move up to include the relevant macro-institutional order and down to the implicated human and non-human agencies, the goal of which are accounts of actual practices that are as rich and insightful as possible.”343 As the study examines individual public servants and agency social media practices, non-human agents such as

342 Huizing and Cavanagh 2011, “Contemporary Practice Theory.”
systems and policies, and the larger governmental context, such an approach has utility in understanding complexity in organizational contexts.

A practice approach allows for an understanding of the enacted relationships between social media practices, understandings of the products generated, and the policy instruments that inform and/or result from both of these. Situating the research inquiry within a practice approach facilitates a focus on the investigation of the dynamics of current practices in particular contexts.

3.5 Methodology

For this study, I employed a qualitative case study design informed by a practice approach and grounded theory methods as exemplified by Charmaz, particularly in relation to data collection and analysis. Case studies are appropriate for revelatory investigations such as this, and they scaffold a more in-depth focus on the examined phenomena. Drawing primarily on a practice approach as articulated in the organizational studies literature, the theoretical insights assembled above aid in framing practices in relation to archives and recordkeeping as organizational activities. Hogan and Quan-Haase argue that a challenge of studying social media is the rapid pace at which new tools are developed, existing tools are updated and/or changed, and new features, policies, and applications of these technologies are consistently introduced. They state that while conclusive answers to

346 Ivanov 2017, “Practice Theory.”

85
research questions and debates on social media and its long-term trajectory are elusive for such a “moving target,” “through a focus on the practices involved in the domestication and mainstreaming of social media, it is possible to develop more robust theories and present widely applicable findings.” While case studies are not generalizable to larger populations or worlds, they can provide insight into lesser understood phenomena and aid in greater understanding and better theorizing.

Situating the case study in the GC allowed me to take an idiographic approach to the phenomena under study—social media practices and the relational policies—in a number of departments and agencies under the umbrella of the broader GC information/records management infrastructure. “Idiographic research attempts to understand a phenomenon in its context,” as opposed to nomothetic methods that “seek general laws and draw solely on procedures used in the exact sciences.”

The attention of this research is primarily exploratory in that it investigated largely undescribed phenomena (i.e. how recordkeeping, records generation, and information policies and practices are affected by social media practices in the GC context) in an effort to illuminate the nexus between social media practices, policy instruments, and the information products generated, informing the phenomena under study. Exploratory research is useful

---

347 Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010, “Persistence and Change,” 309.
348 Yin 2009, Design and Methods; Ivanov 2017, “Practice Theory.”
350 While not specific to a Canadian government context, there is some recent archival literature that investigates the use of social media in relation to records generation. See, for example: Sheffield 2018, “Facebook Live”; Acker and Brubaker 2014, “Personal Archives”; Evans, Franks, and Chen 2018, “Voices in the Cloud”; Mergel 2016, “Social Media Institutionalization.”
when there is little or no existing knowledge about a particular phenomenon, its setting, and/or the social actors involved in its process, and it is often aimed at surveying a broader topic in order to identify more explicit areas of investigation, laying the groundwork for future research and theory generation.351

Case studies are “used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena.”352 While there is no standard definition for a case study, Benbasat, Goldstein, and Mead draw on numerous definitions to assert that:

A case study examines a phenomenon in its natural setting, employing multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities (people, groups, or organizations). The boundaries of the phenomenon are not clearly evident at the outset of the research and no experimental control or manipulation is used.353

A case study methodology is employed when the researcher is deliberately seeking to study contextual conditions with the belief that they will add to an understanding of her study and the phenomena being studied, and it is often used to develop theories and/or generate new insights and knowledge about contemporary phenomena. Exploratory case studies can help to define a phenomenon worthy of further study; they are a good research strategy when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.354

3.5.1 Grounded Theory à la Charmaz

Charmaz’s approach to grounded theory “explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it.”\(^{355}\) According to Charmaz, “constructivist grounded theory assumes relativity, acknowledges standpoints, and advocates reflexivity.”\(^{356}\) This approach is particularly suited to my application of a practice lens in the analysis and explanatory phases of the study, as it allows for a focus on participants’ “implicit meanings” and “experiential views” and facilitates an investigation into the constructive role of practices.\(^{357}\)

Charmaz views grounded theory methods as a “set of principles and practices” that work as “flexible guidelines,” which is how I employed them in the data collection and analysis phases.\(^{358}\) While not strictly adhering to a complete stepwise grounded theory process, I drew upon many of the principles and practices of grounded theory in the gathering and analysis (with particular attention to coding) of the qualitative data utilized for this study. Adopting this strategy supported an active engagement with data analysis throughout the research process.\(^{359}\) This approach allowed me to revisit the research questions outlined in chapter one and to revise them as interactions with the research subjects, documentary texts, and data informed ongoing analysis.

Data gathering and analysis were not linear, hierarchical undertakings; rather, these activities were interactive and interrelated, and my process moved between data sources:

\(^{358}\) Charmaz 2014, 9.
\(^{359}\) Charmaz 2014; Yin 2009, *Design and Methods*. 

88
documentary texts, policies, interviews, and literature. I drew upon specific tools of grounded theory according to Charmaz’s approach to qualitative coding. Engaging in data analysis and comparisons at the beginning of the study as well as after data collection was completed allowed an early preliminary analysis that informed the scope and avenues of data collection throughout the research process. Employing clustering and memo-writing as described by Charmaz enabled comparison and exploration during code generation. Analyzing data while still gathering data facilitated an iterative research process.

3.5.2 Reflexivity and Positionality

Reflexivity is “the researcher’s scrutiny of the research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring him or her into the process.”\textsuperscript{360} Ideally, researchers acknowledge and unfold themselves within the research in an attempt to better understand their part in it and/or influence upon it. Reflexivity requires the researcher to examine how her interests, positions, and assumptions potentially influence her inquiry.\textsuperscript{361} Positionality, or how a researcher situates herself, includes an individual’s worldview and the position she has chosen to adopt in relation to the research. One’s worldview includes epistemological and ontological assumptions and may include both fixed and subjective or contextual facets.

I exercised reflexivity in the research study by thinking about my own position, interests, and biases throughout the research process, discussing them with peers and mentors, and documenting them in memos as the research process unfolded. I also report on

\textsuperscript{360} Charmaz 2014, 344.

\textsuperscript{361} Charmaz 2014.
reflexivity in the analysis and discussion of the research participants and data in chapters four, five and six.

As the primary interpreter for this study, it is important to explicitly state my positionality. As a researcher and practitioner who studied archival science and public policy in a Canadian context, I occupy the roles of both insider and outsider in relation to the culture being investigated in this study. The role of insider is enacted with the application of an archival science lens in the analysis of the record-making and recordkeeping practices, and I had an ongoing awareness of this particular positionality while recruiting for, conducting, and analyzing interviews and while analyzing policy documents. My beliefs and understanding of records and their role in society are informed by a foundational education in archival science, as well as experience working with traumatic collections, designing digital systems, and developing policy. This research is also informed by ongoing examination and evaluation of my own views, values, and beliefs in regard to the phenomena under study and learnings within the social sciences more broadly. But in relation to the GC environment being studied, I was an outsider. I was continually learning about this environment throughout each stage of the study, and this new knowledge was incorporated, both implicitly and explicitly, into subsequent stages. I was strongly influenced by practice theorists in the development of my ideas, and I see these approaches as valuable for their generativity rather than as dogmatic theoretical structures.

During the last decade, I have worked at the intersections of research, archives, digital records, systems design, and curation, particularly with records related to the Holocaust and the Indian Residential School System. This work has informed my personal commitment to notions of transparency and accessibility to information and records and the
importance of government records in the lives of individuals and communities. I hold a
critical view of the Eurocentric positionality of traditional archival theory and the majority of
policies and practices that reinforce the predominance of a normative set of narratives and
records. As such, I position my professional practices within the frame of colonial disruption.
As an individual who identifies as a member of multiple groups, I had an ongoing awareness
of intersectionality, which I continually reflected upon over the duration of the study. As
analysis conducted during this study was interpretive, I was continually reflecting upon my
own positionality in interpreting the results.

3.6 Case Study Selection and Implementation

Cases should be strategically selected based on the theoretical perspectives adopted by the
study and the cases relevant to the study’s goals. Screening criteria for cases should
include: the willingness of key persons in the case to participate in the study, the potential for
rigorous data collection, and preliminary evidence that the case is able to offer the
situation/experience that the study is seeking to investigate. The research study is a single
case study of the GC. As this study sought to understand the social media practices and
policies within the GC, ideal settings to gather data and engage participants were agencies or
departments within the federal government structure.

An earlier investigation into GC social media use in 2012 provided information on
existing policy instruments, established social media accounts, and levels of social media

362 Choemprayong and Wildemuth 2009, “Case Studies.”
363 Yin 2006, “Case Study Methods.”
activity within departments and by public servants. Additionally, I examined websites and social media accounts for GC agencies and departments to identify those actively engaged in the three main social media platforms considered key priorities by the GC at that time: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The range of agencies and departments to study was further narrowed down by the existence and/or availability of social media policy instruments and access to participants. During this earlier investigation, I was also able to gain greater insight into the mechanics of how Twitter operated and the policies that guided its operations. Better understanding of this platform also contributed to early problematizing of the potential record outputs that are generated within Twitter.

As this study focuses on the generation of information and/or records via social media practices and associated policy instruments, two key agencies were identified as initial sites of investigation and sources of participants: Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). Under the *Library and Archives of Canada Act*, LAC is mandated to acquire and preserve Canada’s documentary heritage and facilitate the management of information by government institutions. As mentioned above, the TBS is responsible for the GC policy instruments. Additional agencies were included as a result of snowball sampling of individuals and access to participants, and participants from ten GC agencies were interviewed. Some additional agencies included Aboriginal Affairs and

---

366 Canada, TBS 2015, *Briefing Book*.
Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Industry Canada, PCO, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

A number of reasons informed my choice to focus this study in the GC. As discussed in the opening chapter, I was motivated to undertake this study when reflecting upon the evidentiary role of government information, records, and archives and their capacity to act as instruments of accountability and transparency of past actions/inaction—particularly in relation to the TRC. In its work to bring to light the history surrounding the Indian Residential School System and the systems that supported it, the TRC looked in part to historical, primarily analogue, information and records. As networked digital systems increasingly play a role in regional, national, and international conversations that surround investigations such as truth and reconciliation commissions and act as platforms for ongoing socio-economic and political dialogues (e.g. Idle No More, Lac-Mégantic, Black Lives Matter, US President Trump’s ubiquitous use of Twitter, etc.), there is potential for the digital products of these engagements to be valuable additions to national archives and to act as future records that will aid in shedding light on historical actions or inaction. As the GC was in the nascent stages of social media adoption, policy construction, and management at the outset of this study, I identified it as a strategic and viable case study for investigation.

Subsequently renamed Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), whose dissolution resulted in the formation of the current two agencies: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada.

Renamed Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)

Not all of the agencies from which participants were drawn are listed in efforts to further support the confidentiality of those interviewed.
During this transitionary period, the GC’s information, records, and policy generation witnessed a shift as early social media technologies and practices developed.

As a Canadian with professional and educational experience in this context, I was interested in situating my research in a Canadian context, and my early investigations of this topic demonstrated a dearth of knowledge and literature specific to a Canadian context. As a site of investigation, the GC represented a government that adopted a mandate to embrace emerging social media use in its engagement with citizens, other governments, and its own departments, agencies, and public servants. At the time of data collection (2013–2014), the GC was becoming active on popular social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, which are publicly available for data collection and online observation. Additionally, during the data collection period (2013–2014), the GC had publicly available legislation, policy instruments, and departmental documentation, enabling easy access to these as sources of data. Most crucially, access to sites and participants within the federal government was possible due to my existing professional and collegial relationships. Without this support and participation from professional colleagues, this inquiry would not have been possible.

3.6.1 Setting Description: Government of Canada

The GC is a constitutional monarchy with a system of responsible parliamentary government. The structure of the Canadian federal government is derived from Canada’s


Shaffer, Freund, and Welch 2013; Shaffer 2014.
written constitution in the *Constitution Acts*, 1867–1982. The *Acts* define the powers held by the two orders of government: the federal state and ten largely self-governing provinces and three territories with a lesser degree of self-government. Powers are both divided and shared between parliament and the provincial and territorial legislatures.

As a Westminster parliamentary democracy, Canada has evolved a model of British Westminster government that fits within its specific context. The conventions and customs of the Westminster model establish the key elements of Canadian democracy: the Prime Minister and Cabinet exercise the executive authority in government and are accountable to the House of Commons (Lower House), which is made up of elected representatives; the Queen of Canada is the official head of state and is represented by the Governor General; and the Senate (Upper House) is made up of appointed officials. The Prime Minister “leads the process of setting the general direction of government policy.” The GC Executive Branch includes the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Cabinet is an informal political mechanism that sets the federal government’s policies and priorities, acting in the name of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada. The Governor General appoints House of Commons members to the Cabinet on recommendation of the Prime Minister. Cabinet Ministers are responsible for government departments and agencies, often termed “portfolios” (e.g. finance, national defense, health, etc.). Cabinet Ministers receive confidential advice from the public service and are responsible to the House of Commons and Canadians for their portfolio.

---

374 Canada, PCO 2011, 51.
There are three central agencies in the GC: The Privy Council Office, Department of Finance, and the TBS. The Privy Council Office is the hub of public service, supporting the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and its decision-making structures.\textsuperscript{375} The Clerk of the Privy Council has responsibility for supporting the continuity of government between elections and is “the custodian of the records of the current and previous ministries.”\textsuperscript{376} The Department of Finance is responsible for the government’s macro-economic policy, including tax policy, the overall fiscal framework of government, and analysis of the economic and fiscal impacts of Ministers’ proposals.\textsuperscript{377} The TBS assumes its legal responsibility under the \textit{Financial Administration Act} and other statutes. The policy instruments and policy development processes examined as part of the data for this study fall under the TBS’ jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{378} TBS provides advice and recommendations to the Treasury Board on central oversight in government-wide general administrative policy and organization in the Public Service of Canada and financial and asset management policies and practices including records and information management in GC departments and agencies.\textsuperscript{379}

The Treasury Board, under section 7(1) of the \textit{Financial Administration Act}, is the agency that has oversight to act on all matters relating to administrative policy in the federal public administration.\textsuperscript{380} In carrying out this authority, the Treasury Board, supported by the TBS:

\textsuperscript{375} Canada, PCO 2016, \textit{Departmental Performance Report}.
\textsuperscript{376} Canada, PCO 2011, \textit{Accountable Government}, 57.
\textsuperscript{377} Canada, PCO 2011.
\textsuperscript{378} See Appendix A for a description of TBS policy instruments.
\textsuperscript{379} Canada 1985, \textit{Financial Administration Act}.
\textsuperscript{380} Canada, TBS 2008, “Treasury Board Policies.”
• Identifies and assesses management-related issues to determine if a government-wide approach is necessary;
• Formulates, communicates, reviews, adjusts, and evaluates policy instruments;
• Oversees, interprets, and provides advice to departments on the application of policy instruments;
• Makes decisions with regard to departmental submissions pursuant to the control mechanisms established by a particular policy; and
• Reports to Parliament and the public on whole-of-government management performance.381

As the “management board,” the Treasury Board has the authority to “ensure that the government as a whole is managed in a coherent and effective manner.”382 Treasury Board policy instruments are designed to “convey an integrated approach to the discipline of public sector management.”383

The Treasury Board issues a range of policy instruments designed to establish mandatory requirements (rules) or voluntary best practices. There are three types of mandatory instruments: policies, directives, and standards; and two voluntary instruments: guidelines and tools. The decision to put in place a mandatory versus a voluntary instrument depends on the issue being addressed, the management objective, and whether a lack of

381 Canada, TBS 2008.
382 Canada, TBS 2008, under “Context.”
383 Canada, TBS 2008, under “General Responsibilities and Accountabilities.”
consistency across government has the potential to create inequalities, inefficiencies, or risks that would jeopardize the achievement of the policy objective.384

3.6.1.1 Records and Information Management in the Government of Canada

The GC makes little concrete distinction between records management, which it terms recordkeeping, and information management. Information management in the GC is defined as “a discipline that directs and supports effective and efficient management of information in an organization, from planning and systems development to disposal or long-term preservation.”385 Recordkeeping in the GC refers to “a framework of accountability and stewardship in which records are created, captured, and managed as a vital business asset and knowledge resource to support effective decision making and achieve results for Canadians.”386 Under this policy suite, records are included under information management along with “documents, data, library services, information architecture, etc.”387

Three key pieces of legislation govern recordkeeping in the GC: the Financial Administration Act, the Library and Archives of Canada Act, and the Access to Information Act.388 The GC utilizes the life cycle model as the foundation of its records and information management, with TBS incorporating the information life cycle model into information management policies after the passage of the Access to Information Act.389 According to the

384 Canada, TBS 2008.
385 Canada, TBS 2018, “Policy on Information Management.”
386 Canada, TBS 2018.
387 Canada, TBS 2018.
GC definition, “The life cycle of information management encompasses the following: planning; the collection, creation, receipt, and capture of information; its organization, use and dissemination; its maintenance, protection and preservation; its disposition; and its evaluation.”390 The Access to Information Act “provides a right to access to information in records under the control of a government institution in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public.”391

As this study was concerned with implications for record generation, recordkeeping, and related policy instruments and practices as they relate to emerging social media practices, the above description of the records and information management in the GC aids in contextualizing the findings reported and discussion that follows in chapters four and five.

3.6.2 Data Collection

Methods used for data collection included semi-structured interviews, online and offline observations, and analysis of documentary information.

3.6.2.1 A Note on Confidentiality

In efforts to safeguard anonymity in reporting, transcriptions were anonymized, with the names of the 28 individuals and their respective agencies removed.392 Throughout this study each individual interviewee is referred to by a unique code. Additional steps were required to protect anonymity because those actively engaged in social media use at the time of data

392 Participants were assured of confidentiality in the invitation letter.
collection in the GC belonged to a small, easily identifiable group. Concerns about confidentiality were repeatedly raised during the interview process. For example, one respondent commented that depending on the phrasing it is possible to link certain statements to particular individuals as each portfolio and/or social media profile may be easily identifiable. While this interactivity within the platforms and high level of engagement by key users of social media in government made them easily identifiable for interview requests and snowball sampling, the anonymity of these same participants is impossible to guarantee when using direct quotes. Thus, it is not surprising that a number of participants requested that they not be quoted directly. Paraphrasing is used primarily throughout the research study to protect confidentiality throughout reporting of the findings. Use of direct quotations is limited and identified within quotation marks. Source data references for individual themes are provided through the use of participant codes.

3.6.2.2 Preliminary Analysis of Twitter Data

I gathered social media data in the early stages of this dissertation project while working concurrently with the Tweeting the Government project, which operated as a pre-study and informed the design of this study. The dataset used for the Tweeting the Government project consisted of social media data collected from 25 Canadian federal agency accounts using Twitter’s public API feature via DiscoverText, a cloud-based data gathering and text analysis tool. The data was collected over a one-month period from 14 May 2012 to 15

June 2012. The agencies were chosen to represent a diverse set of federal government functions (e.g. health, environment, finance, etc.). This early investigation revealed that the official use of social media was primarily communicative, and that the communication intents of government agencies were closely aligned with organizational mandates.

After the pre-study collection and analysis of the collected government tweets, I concluded that while the preliminary findings contributed to a general understanding of government social media use, more contextualized and data-rich qualitative methods (e.g. interviews, observations, etc.) would be better suited to address the questions guiding this inquiry. However, this initial study of government social media data allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the Twitter platform, its policies and infrastructure, and its resulting digital objects and related metadata. This knowledge, along with greater understanding of the multiple levels at which public servants engage social media such as Twitter, informed the focus of data collection and inquiry moving forward.

3.6.2.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in a number of different agencies between September 2013 and June 2014 as a result of purposive and snowball sampling based on my professional knowledge of key players in GC roles in relation to my research questions. Individuals identified for possible participation were current or former GC employees who were active social media users and who were involved in policy development and/or implementation, information and records management, archives, communications, and/or a combination of these roles. Additional interviewees included information managers and archivists who had consulted for the GC and/or external to the GC, such as one individual from The National
Archives of the United Kingdom, a foreign government that was piloting a government records social media preservation program at the time.

I identified and interviewed individuals based on their knowledge and/or experience of government recordkeeping, government social media use and preservation, and/or policy development and implementation. I used the GC’s online directory and departmental websites to identify individuals who fit the study’s criteria and to obtain contact information. Potential individuals were also identified via their active social media use, and I contacted potential interviewees via email or through social media (e.g. direct message via Twitter). In some instances, I was required to go through a main agency channel such as stakeholder relations, who then approved and arranged for interviews with relevant agency staff. Participants’ professional roles included senior policy and planning officers, research analysts, archivists and librarians, senior administrators, communication officers, and senior government advisors. I conducted a total of 24 interviews with 28 interviewees. Eight interviewees elected to co-interview with other team members whom they felt had relevant experience and/or knowledge.

For this study’s interviews I used a semi-structured approach with a prepared interview guide for each type of role (e.g. archivist, social media user, policy analyst, etc.).\(^{395}\) Co-interviews were mixed between those who shared similar roles and those who were either in adjacent or hierarchical roles in relation to one another. In these instances, both interview guides were references for relevant questions. I initially employed purposive sampling with snowball sampling following, generating a non-probability sample. During interviews, initial

\(^{395}\) See Appendices D and E for interview scripts.
research participants shared other potential participants with me. These were added, when possible, until I perceived that saturation had been reached.

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to vary the order of questions and to ask questions not previously prepared in response to interviewees’ replies, while ensuring all relevant questions were asked and topical consistency was maintained for each interview. This technique offered the opportunity for me to be responsive and malleable within the interview process. As Charmaz suggests, “interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview and interviewers can immediately pursue these leads.” Employing such an approach allowed me to build on or revise the existing research guide with additional themes and ideas that emerged during previous interviews and to incorporate knowledge gained from documentation interviewees shared with me during the interview process.

As stated by Charmaz, “an interview is contextual and negotiated.” The interaction between interviewer and interviewee is not neutral but reflects what each brings to the interview—the impressions gained and relationship constructed during the interview process. Information is obtained implicitly as well as explicitly during the interview process, and this knowledge guided me in my note-taking and observations during the interview process. The majority of interviews were conducted in-person, with a small

---

397 Charmaz 2014, Grounded Theory, 29.
398 Charmaz 2014, Grounded Theory, 27.
399 Charmaz 2014.
number conducted via Skype or telephone. In-person and Skype interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed; for telephone interviews I took notes by hand during the interview.

During each interview, I took notes relating to the interviewees’ answers, relevant surroundings, non-verbal cues, and specific gestures, and I noted any other observations and/or details I felt relevant to providing context to each interview. Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings, including the interviewee’s place of work, coffee shops, and my office (for Skype and telephone interviews). The average duration of each interview was one and a half hours.

The context within which a number of the interviews took place is noteworthy. The interviews with archivists, librarians, and information professionals at LAC occurred, for the most part, during and in the immediate wake of fractious organizational culture events at LAC. In January of 2013, LAC issued a new code of conduct, which quickly came under fire within the Canadian media and publicly in professional discourse.400 The LAC code was issued in the aftermath of substantial budget cuts to LAC by the sitting Conservative government, the substantial effects of which were being felt by LAC staff and users. The code of conduct was discussed in professional circles as a muzzling of LAC archivists and librarians, ironically, professions whose raison d’être is information/records access and sharing. While the majority of interviews with LAC participants took place after Daniel Caron, the Librarian and Archivist of Canada responsible for the code, departed from LAC, a number of participants alluded to this issue and noted that there was still a cautious

atmosphere within the organization around speaking critically as professionals. I observed a more guarded nature amongst this subset of interviewees. One interviewee in particular, who participated in a two-person interview, requested to speak me subsequently, noting that they did not feel they could speak freely and frankly in a group context due to the atmosphere in the organization that persisted at that time. A number of participants outside of LAC also alluded to an information culture under the Conservative government that was more tightly controlled than in the recent past.

3.6.2.4 Document Analysis

Legislation and policy instruments, directives and guidelines, and documentary information including thought papers, presentations, handbooks, and other materials related to government use and management of social media were gathered prior to, during, and after interviewing took place.\textsuperscript{401} A number of documents were referenced or provided by participants; others were identified through literature review and identified from references. Approximately 35 documents were gathered from government websites, requested directly from government agencies and/or public servants, and obtained during and after interviews from research participants.

\textsuperscript{401} See Appendices B and C for a list of policy instruments and a selection of documents reviewed.
3.6.2.5 Observation

I engaged in informal observations, both online and offline, of the environment and individuals working within the GC. Depending on the physical location of the interview, I was able to make observational field notes regarding the social and physical environment during in-person interviews. As this research includes the use and products of social media technologies, online observations of government use of social media technologies were undertaken throughout the data gathering process. Early investigation of the GC’s three primary external social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) led me to narrow my focus to the GC’s use of Twitter, as well as the publicly available Twitter feeds of public servants in order to enhance the depth of the inquiry—rather than undertaking a thinner analysis of all three tools. The online social media observations were conducted intermittently over the course of the primary data collection period (2013–2014), prior to, in-between, and directly after interviews, as well as during the lead up to selection of the study sample. These online observations allowed me to gain some insights into the department and/or individual’s social media use prior to interviewing participants. For example, how active an agency or participant was on Twitter and what types of topics were being tweeted about. As I chose not to collect the tweets of either agencies or individuals, there were limitations to the conclusions that could be interpreted from these observations.

Although I do not claim that this research is an ethnography, it was informed by a virtual ethnographic perspective, particularly the view that online and offline are not dichotomous but inform and/or are informed by the environment, actions taken, and social

---

practices in each. Hine argues that the internet is both a place and a cultural artefact—facilitating social interaction and also “composed of texts.” Virtual ethnography moves the focus from a physical space to a cultural process. Applying such a lens allowed me to be reflexive in my examination of the “online” and “offline” environments, practices, and artefacts.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process involving continual engagement with and reflection on the data, asking questions of the data, and an analysis process at multiple levels that proceeded from the specific to the general. Moving through the analysis process, the various stages were interrelated and often iterative.

The mechanics of data analysis followed a qualitative approach drawing on Creswell and Charmaz and informed by a practice lens. The qualitative data analysis consisted of a number of procedures moving from data collection, through organizing/re-organizing, coding, and interpretation. Analysis began during the data-gathering process with initial codes beginning to emerge and develop from initial reading and re-reading of the texts—including preliminary transcripts and documents gathered—and assigning codes to phrases and words. These initial codes, as Charmaz notes, “are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data.” This initial coding stage was followed by a process of grouping,

---

403 Hine 2000, *Virtual Ethnography*.
404 Hine 2000, 50.
405 Hine 2000.
utilizing methods of splitting and lumping initial codes where appropriate, and comparing data with other data (additional transcripts and documents) and with existing codes. Data including transcripts, policies, documents, field notes, and observations were continually organized and prepared for analysis; a process of display and reduction was undertaken that facilitated sorting and organizing the data.\footnote{Miles and Huberman 1994, \textit{Qualitative Data Analysis}.} I engaged in memo-writing to capture these initial categories/concepts; fix emerging ideas, themes, and observations; note questions that arose; and look for exceptions and/or contradictions. Thematic categories began to emerge and develop from my initial reading and re-reading of the data sources and grouping of codes, which I then further refined and grouped in building categories and themes.

I employed a combination of hand-coding and use of NVivo 9 software to code transcripts. Charmaz notes that “while engaging in focused coding, we typically concentrate on what we define as the most useful initial codes and then we test them against extensive data.”\footnote{Charmaz 2014, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 138.} Initial and focused coding were not entirely linear in execution, but some initial codes (refined) ultimately surfaced as focused codes. The focused coding stage facilitated grouping according to emergent categories and themes, testing and questioning of developed codes, and progressively moving codes along towards identifying emergent global themes. See Appendix F for the final list of codes, categories and themes identified through data analysis.
3.8 Establishing Trustworthiness

Concepts are created at the abstraction stage in qualitative analysis, and while some aspects of this process can be readily described, it is often more difficult to describe the researcher’s insights or intuitive actions. Trustworthiness is a means of “establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research that provide[s] an alternative to reliability and validity” in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba have established constructs that aid in the evaluation of trustworthiness in qualitative research. These include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In addressing credibility, the researcher attempts to represent the multiple accounts and interpretations of participants and data sources. Transferability involves providing sufficient detail of the research environment in order to determine its similarity to another context. Dependability or reliability—showing that findings are consistent and repeatable—are arguably difficult to meet in qualitative research. However, triangulation can act as a means of strengthening reliability. Confirmability is the extent to which the findings are grounded in the data and not the researcher’s biases or interests. I enlisted triangulation, reflexivity, thick description, and peer debriefing as steps to establish trustworthiness in this research study.

410 Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, and Kyngas 2014, “Qualitative Content Analysis.”
413 Shenton 2004, “Ensuring Trustworthiness.”
3.8.1 Triangulation

Yin advises researchers collecting data to “triangulate” or establish converging lines of evidence to make findings more vigorous; as Benbasat, Goldstein, and Mead note, “the goal is to obtain a rich set of data surrounding the specific research issue, as well as capturing the contextual complexity.”417 I employed a number of research methods within the research design. During the analysis process I sought convergences and contradictions to enhance a richer and more nuanced interpretation of the data sources. As argued by Williamson, Burstein, and McKemmish, “conclusions are likely to be more reliable if data are collected by more than one method.”418 By using multiple data collection methods, the researcher can “take advantage of the strengths and offset the weaknesses of each.”419 I tested codes across data sources; for example, those relating to policy and frictions in the policy process were identified across transcripts, policy instruments, and policy development documentation. Observations regarding organizational culture were surfaced across data sources gathered including interview transcripts and documentary sources.

3.8.2 Thick Description

Lincoln and Guba describe thick description as a way of achieving transferability, which they liken to the concept of external validity.420 Thick description refers to a detailed reporting by the researcher that contextualizes patterns of social and cultural relationships and that can

include the research context, participants, and research design.\textsuperscript{421} Thick description can provide multiple perspectives about a theme resulting in more realistic and richer results.\textsuperscript{422} In line with this approach, I described the legal context of the research setting in detail in this chapter, and additional context regarding the participants and documentary evidence is discussed in chapters four and five.

### 3.8.3 Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing involves engaging one’s peers in discussions of the researcher’s processes, interpretations, and foundations of analysis.\textsuperscript{423} I elicited comments and feedback from colleagues throughout the research study; I sought out conversations with members of my doctoral committee, fellow doctoral students, and experienced qualitative researchers. Additionally, I presented my research to fellow doctoral students, professional archivists, and researchers in a number of national and international contexts. Peer feedback was iteratively reviewed in conjunction with data collection, memo-writing, and data analysis. Peer feedback provided opportunities for me to re-examine processes, data sources, and themes.

### 3.9 Summary

Research design was undertaken within a framework informed by a practice theory approach. Grounded theory concepts and practices informed the qualitative case study design and analysis of the data. A case study of the GC was carried out, using a combination of 28

\textsuperscript{421} Geertz 1973, \textit{Interpretation of Cultures}.
\textsuperscript{422} Creswell 2009, \textit{Research Design}.
\textsuperscript{423} Creswell 2009; Lincoln and Guba 1985, \textit{Naturalistic Inquiry}. 

111
interview participants as well as document and policy analysis. Data collection and analysis were recursive and iterative throughout the study, with analysis moving from the particular to the general. I engaged a reflexive approach in my analysis of the data and reporting of findings.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

A challenge of studying a phenomenon such as social media and their accompanying practices is the rapid pace of change these technologies undergo as well as the ongoing evolution of practices as users continually negotiate their use of these evolving platforms. This reality necessitates situating findings contextually, which, with regard to this study, means temporally. As such, this study is exempliative of a particular point in time that examines early adoption and use of social media in the GC. A number of the policy instruments examined have been rescinded and/or replaced, and early practices have continued to evolve.

This chapter presents the research findings and discusses the major themes identified. As discussed in chapter three, data analysis was an ongoing and iterative process that began at data collection and continued through the writing process. The data sources for this study included transcribed interviews, relevant legislation, and policy instruments as well as presentations, reports, thought papers, memos, speeches, and social media posts. A number of themes emerged during early analysis of policy instruments. Many continued to gain depth through other documentary sources. These were further examined throughout the analysis of interview transcripts, while additional themes emerged and existing categories were checked, enhanced, and/or expanded upon. Themes that surfaced across data sources

424 See Appendices B and C for a list of policy instruments and a selection of documents reviewed.
were identified, as were variations and divergences in perspectives of respondents across government agencies and disciplines.

4.2 Themes

The following themes and sub-themes emerged from data analysis and are presented in order of perceived significance:

- Appropriation Friction in a Bureaucratic Ecosystem
- Practice Crossing Tensions
  - Crossing Platforms: Internal and external social media
  - Crossing Roles: Official, personal and professional use of social media
- Status Quo Disruptors
- Organizational Capacities
- Contested Status
- Role of Policy
  - Tensions in the Process
  - Partial Policy Instruments
- Institutionalized Tensions

Themes identified are demarcated for purposes of analytical clarity. Representation of themes as discrete categories adds clarity for reporting purposes, but it is not meant to represent or suggest exclusivity. Each theme positions readers to see different elements related to how social media-based information practices within GC developed, however there is no singular appropriation story to be told, rather the different facets or themes add depth to
a contested, complicated and ongoing process of appropriation. Each of the following sections discusses one of the identified themes, including sub-themes.

4.3 Appropriation Friction in a Bureaucratic Ecosystem

This theme discusses the contested, complicated, and ongoing process of social media appropriation within the GC.\textsuperscript{425}

The GC web 2.0 ecosystem includes both external and internal social media tools and are divided into three distinct access layers by the GC. The first layer includes external social media tools used for communication and collaboration, for example: Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The second layer, the cross-government “GC2.0 Tools,” comprises the social media behind the GC firewall that are available to all GC employees. These tools include GCConnex, a professional collaboration platform launched in 2009, and GCPedia, the GC official internal wiki, launched in 2008. Another tool, GCForums, which was a forum for cross-department discussions and supported open or closed collaboration, was “sunsetted” in 2015 as similar functionalities existed in GCConnex.\textsuperscript{426} The third layer comprises those tools that exist at the department level and facilitate collaboration and/or sharing between specific employees at the department level, for example SharePoint, departmental wikis, etc. GCConnex and GCPedia are available across the GC’s 138 federal agencies and accessible to over 250,000 public servants.\textsuperscript{427}

\textsuperscript{425} Appropriation in the context of this theme is defined as the use of social media platforms by public servants and GC agencies as tools for enacting professional and organizational functions beyond the “social” functions for which they were primarily designed.
\textsuperscript{426} Canada, TBS 2014, “GC2.0 Tools.”
\textsuperscript{427} Canada, TBS 2014.
Considering the GC web 2.0 ecosystem as layered can be useful, but in the analysis there was substantial evidence of how activity and information worked across and between these conceptual and technical layers. For example, GCPedia, an internal tool, has an unofficial public Twitter feed that “retweet[s] GCPedia mentions and announcements” and includes tweets about when the system and other internal GC 2.0 Tools are down or undergoing maintenance, etc.\footnote{Canada, GCPedia n.d., “Twitter Biography.”}

According to interview participants, the introduction of social media tools into the GC’s public service by public servants took a “bottom-up” or grassroots approach while the majority of official government social media use occurred via agency communications departments. Interview data suggested persistent and ongoing differences between the GC’s officially sanctioned social media practices and the broader public’s social media practices. As one interviewee stated, communications departments see social media as “another tool in the toolbox.”\footnote{Interview with I002.} The rules and protocols that governed this use were nested in a hierarchical command-and-control form of government information generation and dissemination, which ran counter to the conversational nature of social media practices that were developing at that time.\footnote{Clarke 2014, “Privacy and Social Media.”} For example, interview findings revealed high-level approval was required within a department before tweets could be posted to official department accounts, in some instances from the departmental minister’s office or the deputy minister themselves.\footnote{Interviews with I007 and I009.} While some interviewees saw this practice as inconsistent with a medium such as Twitter, where a
“conversational tone” is intended, others noted that approval was usually quick, so they did not feel it interfered too much with how social media, in particular Twitter, operates.432 An internal Twitter policy instrument issued by Industry Canada in 2014 highlighted the hierarchical approach taken to a social media technology that was marketed for its asynchronous spontaneity and ease of communication.433 The “Industry Canada on Twitter” memo includes twelve steps in the process of getting tweets posted to an official departmental Twitter account, with a week’s worth of tweets being planned and approved in advance.434

Early experimentation with social media in the GC at the departmental level occurred with individual departments, social media experimenters, and champions introducing internal wikis to facilitate departmental information-sharing and collaboration as well as creating wikis for collaboration with external stakeholders.435 A number of interviewees noted that departmental collaborative tools were readily taken up and used. I005 remarked that departmental wiki use was widespread in the GC, with unique management and branding specific to each department. I006 states that, since its introduction in 2009, wiki use within the department increased and was “widely accepted.” The departmental wiki was widely used throughout the department for a variety of collaborative functions from project

432 See, for example: Interviews with I001, I007, I009, and I020; Murthy 2013, Social Communication.
435 See, for example: Interviews with I008 and I020.
management to creating policies. I006 also cites accessibility of information by a variety of stakeholders as a motivator for wiki use within the department.

Several participants noted that the introduction of social media tools into their departments generated and supported a shift in individual and group work practices. According to I020, about sixty per cent of the department’s work was done via wiki collaboration, resulting in an implicit change to GC’s hierarchical organizational model as “there is no hierarchy on a wiki.” With the tools to support the process, collaborative work practices were viewed as actively promoted within the GC environment.  

One interviewee cited instant messaging as an example of shifting work practices, stating that department use of instant messaging was “well accepted,” with increased engagement statistics supporting it; instant messaging within this department was being encouraged as a replacement for all transitory emails.

GCPedia, the GC’s internal cross government wiki platform, was officially launched in October 2008 as a pilot that facilitated information sharing and collaboration across government at all levels. Originating from a small group of public servants in the TBS’ Chief Information Officer Branch (CIOB), GCPedia was described by I001 as a great example of “stealth implementation.” The creators of GCPedia envisioned it in 2007 and started it within a closed group, motivated by the belief that there was a need to introduce web 2.0 tools to the GC to facilitate collaboration and communication on issues that cut across the government, such as policy, information management, and human resources.

436 Interview with I020.  
437 Interview with I012.  
438 Interview with I001.
According to I001, a lot of work was done to consult with and educate the various policy centres (e.g. official languages, information management, privacy) prior to the pilot launch of GCPedia in efforts to generate some simple rules around its use.439 The intent was to keep the development as transparent as possible. Alongside the formation of GCPedia, as mentioned above, a few other agencies were operating intranet and extranet wikis to collaborate with stakeholders within the agencies, across the GC and outside it.440 As one interviewee observed, it could be challenging to manage, but the convenience of access was worth it.441 Since the introduction of GCPedia into the GC in 2008, social media tools such as departmental wikis were fairly commonplace, and all GC agencies had official Twitter and Facebook pages, with many using YouTube and other commercial social media tools as well.

According to a number of interviewees, prior to the introduction of GCPedia there were limited mechanisms to collaborate across departments, and information sharing was often restricted within departments, with information seen as “siloed.” According to interviewees, the idea of GCPedia was to allow for inter-departmental collaboration by sharing and providing access to information behind the GC’s firewall. Additionally, the thinking was that new public servants entering the GC, seen by a number of interviewees as digitally savvy, would expect to work on the web 2.0 platforms they had studied on and socialized in, as these were a part of their world experience.442 As in other GC departments where social media tools were introduced, an immediate, large-scale uptake of GCPedia did

439 Interview with I001.
440 Interview with I020.
441 Interview with I020.
442 Interviews with I001 and I002.
not occur; the initial introduction of GCPedia was met with skepticism. While there were over 44,000 users of GCPedia in October of 2013, contributing over 22,500 articles, there was not great enthusiasm for it, according to interviewees.

Participants identified the importance of “champions” in efforts to get social media innovation off the ground. Referencing the development of GCPedia, I001 said: “we had a CIO who had some vision, and … [we] made it happen as a pilot, as a proof of concept.”

Across a number of interviews, participants mentioned the relevance of social media proponents whose advocacy and support facilitated experimentation with social media and exploration of the opportunities and impediments social media posed. Participants noted that the rank of the champions (i.e. their place in the GC hierarchy) was relevant to the success or failure of social media uptake and implementation.

Interview data revealed frictions in the ad hoc adoption of social media by public servants and the officially sanctioned use of social media by the GC. I020 observed that some social media use by agencies was “unofficial,” as permissions could be slow to come for those agencies that perhaps were seen as potentially posting content to social media that may be viewed as provocative within a conservative information atmosphere. Some interviewees were critical of the slow pace of government in adopting emergent technologies such as social media versus the rapid pace at which public servants were incorporating these technologies into their professional identities and practices. Examples of the latter include collegial online discussions regarding contemporary issues and professional practices (e.g.

---

443 Interview with I007; Canada, TBS 2014, “GC2.0 Tools.”
444 Canada, TBS 2014.
445 Interviews with I001, I002, I018, and I022.
policy analysis, records management, etc.), work adjacent practices such as meet ups or un-conferences, the GC #w2p Twitter conversations, etc. The construction of knowledge and reproduction of the sociality of these technologies was continually acted out within public servants’ professional capacities. While not necessarily tied to their “official” duties, these practices were contributing to organized sense making within these communities (e.g. #w2p) and beginning to generate rules and norms that would manifest more broadly in the workplace as the nexus of individuals’ roles as practitioners, professionals and private citizens are interconnected.

A number of interviewees invoked a “field of dreams” metaphor— “if you build it, they will come”—in criticism of their perception that the GC was officially adopting social media technologies but not the ethos of these technologies, which they perceived as the horizontal and collaborative work practices and workflows these technologies support. As one interviewee noted, it is difficult to work within a system that is hierarchical and standardized when horizontal thinking and management are what is required; the existing government system lacked room for the creativity required to innovate. Interviewees also noted that social media practices can contribute to shifts in the power controls of a traditional government hierarchy. Professionals whose work practices include digital experience and knowledge will appropriate new digital tools more quickly and their practices can be threatening to the existing government status quo. According to some interviewees, the culture of the GC is one of “information as power” and emergent digital tools and the

446 Interviews with I001, I002, I022.
447 Interview with I022.
practices they support disrupt information flows and make transparent the knowledge creation process.448

According to interview data, the grassroots, bottom-up adoption and use of emerging social media by individual public servants challenged the hierarchical and policy infrastructure within which GC public servants operated. Interviewees discussed the culture of social media being more relevant to their adoption and use than the technology itself. The ongoing construction of knowledge within social media practices was supported by the conditions of collaboration and networks that social media use afforded them. Several interviewees noted that it was natural for themselves and their colleagues to use these tools when they were reflecting on the impact of social media technology use on GC work practices. I002 noted that social media use was not viewed by many public servants who used it as explicitly pushing against the existing GC system, but as the best way for public servants to carry out the jobs they are tasked with doing. Social media technologies were active agents in the developing assemblage of shared practices that public servants were establishing, the result of which was a rapidly shifting information generation and sharing ecosystem. Interviewees stressed the “informal side,” referring to those grassroots public servants who have taken up the mantle of social media use. These GC employees demonstrated their dedication to social media tools through efforts to fit these ideas and innovative work practices into their GC roles and responsibilities. Many of the interviewees stressed that the technologies were a means of supporting innovation in the public service and effecting change to bureaucratic models, not just new tools. As one interviewee stated, “I

448 See, for example: Interviews with I002 and I022.
live and breathe in the communities of social media enthusiasts who seek to elevate the conversation beyond just what it is and actually create more value for Canadians.”

The data indicates that public servants engaged in grassroots practices via a number of channels—participating in online informal communities, creating blogs to discuss public sector change through technology and generating publications. An ad hoc, grassroots community of public servants (and some individuals outside of GC public service) formed around social media use within the GC and they communicated, collaborated and shared both online and offline in efforts to engage with one another and move their agenda of public service innovation and bureaucratic transformation forward. Members of this group saw web 2.0 tools and the ethos of collaboration they encourage as a means of shifting hierarchical bureaucratic culture. In 2009, the group began using the Twitter hashtag #w2p, standing for web 2.0 practitioners to engage with one another on issues of technology and public sector innovation and reform, share information and plan offline gatherings. A number of interviewees referenced the #w2p community and the broader online community of GC public servants, noting it as an early movement within government that was unusual because it was not formally sanctioned by government. Instead it rose up as an informal, ad hoc and grassroots movement initiated by GC public servants on their own.

The grassroots adoption of social media by public servants in the GC caught the attention of the Clerk of the Privy Council who would go on to advocate for its inclusion in

449 Interview with I025.
450 Interviews with I001, I002, I008, and I020.
451 See, for example: Interviews with I001 and I003.
public service renewal. In his *Eighteenth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada*, Clerk of the Privy Council Wayne Wouters stated:

> Following my last report I consulted with public servants via GCPEDIA for views on how to renew the workplace. I heard a number of ideas, which I shared with deputies. Most of these rightly point to the need for culture change in the Public Service. We need to nurture a more performance-oriented, collaborative and innovative culture by, for example, taking greater advantage of Web 2.0 tools to deliver on our business.

While this statement by Wouters demonstrates his explicit advocacy for inclusion of web 2.0 tools in the GC workplace, the reference to his use of GCPedia as a government wide consultation tool reflected the growing adoption and acceptance of social media tools and practices within the GC.

In June 2013, the Clerk of the Privy Council released *Blueprint 2020*, a document developed with GC deputy heads. The GC’s Blueprint 2020 is a government-wide initiative to develop a vision for the Canadian public service moving forward in efforts to “improve services to Canadians and advance Canada’s social and economic interests.”

The guiding principles outlined in the *Blueprint 2020* document see the GC belatedly adopt the notions of social media engagement and government reform that early adopter public servants had been advocating for since the launching of GCPedia five years earlier. The guiding principles include:

- An open and networked environment that engages citizens and partners for the public good …

---

452 Public service renewal under the banner of Blueprint 2020 is a government-wide initiative to engage public servants to provide input into improving the public service. See: Canada, PCO 2019, “About Blueprint 2020.”
• A whole-of-government approach that enhances service delivery and value for money …
• A modern workplace that makes smart use of new technologies to improve networking, access to data and customer service …
• A capable, confident and high-performing workforce that embraces new ways of working and mobilizing the diversity of talent to serve the country’s evolving needs.455

Social media tools were incorporated into the GC’s public service renewal activities, which, according to some interviewees, brought social media further into the government’s use; however, it was not without disruption. Blueprint 2020 enlisted external and internal social media tools more formally through Twitter and GCConnex. The Twitter hashtag #gc2020, which was used to engage public servants in discussion of Blueprint 2020 on a social media platform outside of official government channels, was included in more than 13,000 tweets between June and November 2013.456 Internally, the GCConnex Blueprint 2020 group had over 3,000 members and over 120 discussion threads.457 Engagement around Blueprint 2020 was not without challenges however. According to I025, the GCConnex system was pushed beyond its capacity due to the number of people on the system as a result of Blueprint 2020 and frustrations ran high with system-driven slowdowns at key points in the discussions. A number of interviewees expressed skepticism at a government wide initiative such as Blueprint 2020 as potentially being of little effect.

455 Canada, PCO 2013, 4.
456 Canada, PCO 2013, Blueprint 2020 Summary, under “Engaging in Blueprint 2020.”
457 Canada, PCO 2013, 1.
Interviewees noted a disconnect between the discussions that surrounded open data, open government and innovation, and the ability to enact innovation across the federal government. One interviewee expressed the belief that, because GC departments were quite fragmented, a one size fits all approach to innovation would likely prove ineffective over time. As mentioned earlier, several interviewees noted that they brought what they learned in the informal social media communities of government workers back into their official positions in government, which was where innovation actually happened. I025 stated that there was a lot of conversation about innovation generally, but very little actual innovation taking place within the GC at a broader level. Those interviewees critical of the GC’s broad initiatives noted that top down innovation could miss the mark, as it often did not operationalize well at the department and individual levels.

This theme works to highlight the role of grassroots innovation in social media adoption and its role in the more official government uses of social media. The work of individuals—arguably early adopters and social-media-use champions—brought external ideas, co-constructed practices, and shared experiences in efforts to use social media tools to address challenges, share, innovate, and problem-solve. These practices laid the groundwork for more sanctioned and supported practices across the government more broadly.

### 4.4 Practice Crossing Tensions

Issues involving the protection and/or crossing of practice boundaries continually surfaced in the data at different levels. Two primary sub-themes emerged in an exploration of practice crossing tensions: firstly, internal and external social media sites, and, secondly, official, professional, and personal use of social media.
4.4.1 Crossing Platforms: Internal and External Social Media

The findings revealed that divisions between internal and external social media use were not rigidly defined or easily managed. The GC 2.0 tools provided GC public servants with government wide mechanisms for collaboration and sharing inside the GC firewall; however, public servants did not confine such activities to internal sites. Public servants’ work practices included external social media, in particular Twitter, for a variety of reasons. When asked why they engaged in conversations and shared government information on external social media applications such as Twitter, interviewees noted as motivators: sharing, collaborating, networking and finding ways to innovate in government using technology.458

The broader public communication opportunities of being in an open platform such as Twitter were one of the key reasons GC public servants were engaging in external social media platforms. As I002 stated:

I have this whole other world that I engage in and it makes me really good at what you [employer] are asking me to do, and you [employer] have to understand that if you [employer] want me to do the things that you [employer] want me to do you [employer] have to give me the trust and the space to be in this [social media] environment, because the best ideas are out there, they’re not in here [GC].

Interviews with public servants who actively used Twitter professionally showed that the audience was part of the conversation,459 and, in an open platform such as Twitter, they were able to engage in these broader conversations. On Twitter, public servants engaged with one another, with citizens, and with public servants from other international jurisdictions.

---

458 See, for example: Interviews with I001, I002, and I003.
459 See, for example: Interviews with I001, I002, and I020.
Interviewees believed there was great value in these conversations, informing how they did their jobs and advancing the agenda of transforming government with emergent digital technologies. For I025, the impact was considerable: “I realized that there was a government community on Twitter that is actively looking at web 2.0 practices … and so it’s basically shaped my entire practice. The links to the communities that you make there mean everything.”

Those individuals within GC agencies that are afforded professional room and took the initiative to engage in external social media platforms argued such engagement made them better at their jobs within the GC.

Sharing of information was another reason participants gave for engaging on external social media platforms. One reason participants chose to engage professionally on external social media sites such as Twitter was to access information that was not necessarily available to them internally. As I002 noted, limiting oneself to internal social media tools as a public servant means not having access to broader ecosystems of information needed to do one’s job well. I002 noted that, while there may be an advantage of context with internal tools, finding, accessing and connecting information and individuals was lacking internally, and a platform like Twitter could complement internal tools such as GCPedia in facilitating public servants in doing their jobs effectively. This practice crossing between internal and external platforms to enact functions such as communication, collaboration and sharing was common amongst interviewees and increasingly represented how many public servants were incorporating social media into their work practices.

Interview with I025.

See, for example: Interviews with I002, I020, and I022.
In addition to being the beneficiaries of external information sharing, several participants noted that bringing awareness to internal information also influenced their presence on external social media sites such as Twitter. Internal GC 2.0 tools are only available to public servants behind the GC firewall. Some interviewees pointed out that information in GCPedia is subject to access and privacy legislation and therefore available to citizen requests. As one interviewee noted, while not all Twitter followers may be able to access an internal GC link posted in a tweet, they would now be aware of its existence. The potential would then exist for such information to become available via an access to information request. Such mildly subversive practices perhaps support more transparency with regard to government information practices and align with the shift from e-government to Open Government.

Practice crossing tensions relating to internal and external social media platforms also surfaced in relation to information and records management and archival practices. Interview findings reveal that, while use of external social media sites was widely adopted in the GC, the ability to manage and/or preserve potential information of business value or records identified in these platforms was not yet within the capacity of the GC widely. This is further discussed under the theme “organizational capacities.”

462 The Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act apply to information on internal government social media platforms (e.g. departmental wikis, GCPedia).
464 Interviews with I005 and I024.
4.4.2 Intersecting Roles: Official, Professional, and Personal Social Media Use

There were three types of social media use in the GC by public servants: official, professional, and personal. Interview data showed, however, that role crossing between personal and professional use of social media were often nuanced and malleable; continually shifting, even overlapping in some circumstances. The types of use are defined by the TBS in the 2014 policy document, “Guideline on Acceptable Network and Device Use” (GANDU):

- Official use is “only for those individuals who have been authorized to represent the Government of Canada.”
- Professional use is defined as “the use of a personal social media account for purposes related to professional activities, such as communicating with professional associations, professional networking (e.g. participating in an online conference), gathering and sharing knowledge (e.g. using Twitter to stay up-to-date on trends or visiting government Facebook pages) and career development (e.g. maintaining a LinkedIn profile).”
- Personal use is defined as “the use of a personal social media account for purposes unrelated to professional development or employment (e.g. blogging about gardening tips, checking the weather or bus schedules, or sharing personal or family photos). This type of use is limited and must be conducted on personal time.”

All three types are also mentioned in the 2013 “Policy on Acceptable Network and Device Use” (PANDU); however, the official use of social media is primarily covered by the GANDU.

Participants revealed that public servants used personal social media accounts such as Twitter to engage, collaborate and share information related to their roles and interests as public servants in the GC, often identifying themselves as such in these platforms. These accounts were also how public servants engaged with initiatives such as Blueprint 2020 and in communities such as #w2p, as well as communities beyond the GC. Participants expressed a desire to use Twitter because it had such widespread uptake by those individuals both inside of and outside of the GC with whom they engaged and shared. As I002 stated, “it’s about the quality of the folks you can connect with … when people ask me what’s going on in the UK, or what’s going on in the US, I can get that information. I can’t do that if all I do is look on GCPedia.” Interviewees noted that they believed building those networks of relationships and having that firsthand knowledge gained on platforms such as Twitter made them more informed on relevant issues and better at their jobs as public servants.

A number of participants noted that, due to the nature of social media platforms, their personal and professional use was often seamless. All public servants interviewed were keenly aware of the “Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector,” as well as applicable agency codes of conduct and their blanket application to GC public servants’ conduct around the clock. There was also recognition on the part of the GC that there is a blurring of the

---

466 Canada, TBS 2014, “PANDU,” under “Appendix B” and “Appendix C.”
467 Canada, TBS 2011, “Values and Ethics Code.”
lines between professional and personal use of social media. GANDU notes: “the networks, devices and social media platforms used for professional purposes are sometimes the same as those used for personal activities, thus potentially blurring the boundaries between the professional and personal use by public servants.”

The existence of practice crossing tensions revealed the knowledge established within these practices, engaging with individuals, information objects, and technologies, operated across personal, professional and official networks of interaction and exchange—each informing the other, resulting in an interconnected and evolving information ecosystem. The social media practices of Canadian public servants facilitated the ability to move across previously rigid silos of communication, generated information and shared within and outside of government. The practice of crossing boundaries previously impermeable had implications for information policy and long-term accessibility and usability of government information and records.

4.5 Social Media Outputs and Use: Status (Quo) Disruptors

The theme of disruptors emerged through interviewees reflecting on material outputs generated using social media tools and the relationship of these outputs to recordkeeping and archives, as well as opportunities for collaborative work practices.

Findings point to a shift in work practices amongst some public servants that was facilitated by the uptake and use of social media tools, specifically the affordances of social

468 Squire and Androsoff 2013, “Developments in Social Networks for Government of Canada Employees.”
media technologies in relation to traditional record making/keeping and the traditional archival practices and policies that governed these practices.

This project’s analysis of policy and interview data indicates that the ability to effectively manage records and preserve information identified as having long-term value generated with social media was challenged in a number of areas. Traditional archival concepts such as fixity, boundedness, interrelatedness and the archival bond are some of the concepts that were seen to be difficult to articulate and maintain when dealing with outputs generated in social media platforms (e.g. individual tweets, Twitter threads, Twitter conversations). Interviewees indicated that appraising the boundaries required for effective capture and preservation, and ensuring the presence of required metadata in social media platforms was complicated and often challenging in this content. Additionally, the findings revealed that web harvesting and preservation approaches undertaken by Library Archives Canada at the time were primarily driven by their legal deposit mandate and cultural heritage documentation perspective. Their mandate to be the permanent repository for the GC records deemed as having historical value as well as those with potential heritage or social memory value had yet to intersect with the collection of social media content.

The Library and Archives of Canada Act grants the Librarian and Archivist of Canada a number of powers to collect web content in its collecting mandate. Specifically, section 8.2 regarding collecting publications from the internet; section 10, which addresses legal deposit; and sections 12 and 13, which address government and ministerial records.

470 See, for example: Interviews with I021, I023, I024, and I027.
471 See, for example: Interviews with I004, I019, and I021.
Section 8.2, which outlines the “powers of the Librarian and Archivist,” specifically, “sampling from the Internet,” states:

In exercising the powers referred to in paragraph (1)(a) and for the purpose of preservation, the Librarian and Archivist may take, at the times and in the manner that he or she considers appropriate, a representative sample of the documentary material of interest to Canada that is accessible to the public without restriction through the Internet or any similar medium.\[472\]

While this authority allows for a “sampling” of online data, it does not explicitly allow for the types of activities that would support a wholesale web harvesting of identified online content under sections 10, 12 and/or 13. Currently, the Act allows for the collection of published heritage materials,\[473\] therefore placing the collecting of such content beneath the umbrella of the “library side” of LAC under its mandate of legal deposit, which expands to online content, under section 10 of the Act. Records, on the other hand, are covered by sections 12 and 13 of the Act, which address “government and ministerial records.”\[474\] The Act’s inclusion of digital (and online) materials into its legal deposit authority is forward thinking. However, findings revealed that social media content was something the public servants at LAC were striving to understand and did not yet have clarity on.\[475\] The Act applies to Canada; however, the internet is international in scope and material of interest to Canadians may reside outside of national boundaries (e.g. Twitter account of the Prime Minister). Technically, the legislation does not empower LAC to acquire this material as it resides outside of the country and the legislative jurisdiction of LAC. As I021 states, these

\[473\] Interview with I021.
\[475\] Interviews with I019, I021, and I024.
hurdles speak to the “sort of nebulous situation that we [GC] are in [in] this digital age.”

While a government agency has the ability to select and flag for retention outgoing Twitter content, which could be the equivalent of a letter file retained by the sender, such processes do not capture the context within which the tweet is operating. And due to the proprietary nature of the platform, there is not clarity on the completeness of the metadata being captured along with the communication. Issues of context are further discussed in the following paragraphs.

At the time of data collection (2013–2014) LAC had developed its web harvesting and preservation program with a need to adhere to the Act and generate the program within the limits of what the Act will allow, which means collecting web content under an authority of legal deposit. However, as I021 states, “essentially the situation has evolved beyond the ability of the Act to capture the situation.” The role of policy in addressing these issues surfaced in the findings as participants referenced its utility in addressing digital and online materials, as well as its role in aiding the GC to remain relevant as practices of digital records generation and publishing advance.476 According to I021, policy instruments beneath legislation are a realistic and desirable way to begin addressing these issues internally. There is a belief that applying scrutiny and engaging in consultation with stakeholders would support an ongoing internal policy process and ensure that policy stays current.477

Issues of context and interrelatedness arose in the examination of social media products such as tweets. Context can be difficult to define in a platform such as Twitter,
which supports retweets, replies, modified tweets, etc. The ability to adequately capture
tweets, even when sufficient context has been identified, may be hampered by technological
or policy factors. For example, over 150 separate metadata fields are automatically generated
when a tweet is;478 however, this metadata may not necessarily be available for collection
depending on the account owner and issues relating to access as LAC has encountered.479
The technological infrastructure of platforms such as Twitter may change without notice, and
this creates the need to be agile and continually vigilant when building and maintaining tools
and platforms designed to collect tweets and their metadata.480 As several interviewees noted,
legislation that governs national archives such as LAC and TNA and its ability to acquire and
preserve records was limited when it comes to gathering social media content, particularly
when that content resides outside of a country’s borders.481 Limitations to archives’ abilities
to harvest tweets beyond those originating from a government department (e.g. the other side
of a Twitter engagement that may contain replies, retweets, etc.) may be restricted as tweets
may fall outside of the legislated mandate of the archival institutions.482

Harvesting content from social media sites may also be limited by issues of
accessibility. Most social media platforms are owned by for-profit companies, often
originating in other jurisdictions (e.g. US). Based on the rules governing the data that resides
in these platforms, permission may be required to harvest the relevant content from these

478 Dwoskin 2014, “In a Single Tweet.”
479 Interview with I026.
480 Interview with I026.
481 Interview with I021, I024, and I026.
482 Interview with I021 and I026.
sites. A number of interviewees indicated that securing such permission was difficult to obtain from large companies such as Facebook, and even then may be outside of the mandated legislation of the collecting institution. The ability of national archives to collect information beyond what is generated by their own governments is challenged, as their legislation may not permit such capture. For example, the UK government’s 2011–2013 pilot project to capture its Twitter use was only able to capture tweets by the government and those links in the site that were internal to the UK government. This restriction substantially limits the information context, as only one side of a conversation may be preserved. Findings also pointed to issues of organizational culture intersecting with technological and policy disruptors, potentially limiting the ability to capture and preserve social media outputs in a timely fashion.

In its early investigative “thought papers” developed in 2010, LAC began to explore the implications of web 2.0 for records and archives and noted the changes and potential complications these technologies and their uptake may pose to how information and records are generated and managed and to archival theory. Findings from documentary analysis as well as a number of interviewees suggest that the social media tools and adopted work practices these tools support challenge “the notion of discrete, bounded information resources,” which have traditionally been at the foundation of information and records

483 Interview with I021 and I024.
484 Interview with I021, I024, and I026.
485 Interview with I026.
486 Interviews with I021, I024, and I026.
487 See, for example: Canada, LAC 2010, Foundations of Information Management and Web 2.0 and Recordkeeping.
LAC identified a number of the challenges on how collecting is approached: “[W]e must think of collecting networks rather than discrete collections; we must reconceptualise notions of enduring value, and we must develop new means of making information resources discoverable and accessible.” There was not consensus on the ethos of the thought papers amongst LAC participants, on issues regarding archives and records theory versus organizational processes and cultures, or on the utility of distinguishing between information, publications, and/or records. The organizational culture at LAC highlights the professional distinctions between librarians and archivists and the materials they are tasked with stewarding. This distinction was particularly problematic during the tenure of the Librarian and Archivist of Canada who held the office just prior to this study. Frictions were evident during a number of interviews regarding what had been an institution-wide, problematic organizational culture for a number of years, and were beginning to shift at the time of the interviews (in 2013). Further development and/or discussion of the thought papers after their initial release was halted due to this culture.

The data indicates that LAC’s approach to social media was one of research and data gathering, notwithstanding the widespread and ongoing use of these technologies already prevalent amongst public servants and citizens. LAC was in the nascent stages of

490 See, for example: Interviews with I021 and I023.
491 Interviews with I004 and I019.
experimentation with social media content harvesting, and only from a cultural heritage perspective rather than in relation to government departmental use.492

The technological affordances of Twitter pose obstacles to ensuring fixity and interrelatedness of materials generated within the platform. For example, the Twitter account that originated as the GC’s Social Media Policy Development Committee (@dm_smpd) was subsequently changed to the Deputy Ministers Committee on Policy Innovation (@DMCPI) when the committee name changed, resulting in all of the tweets since its inception retroactively being authored by the @DMCPI, a committee that did not even exist when the earliest tweets were authored. The presence of de facto rules such as this that are embedded within platforms is important for archives to take into account, as such rules shape the technological artefacts that are generated with the platforms. Rules such as these further complicate provenance within bureaucratic records-generating systems. There were also questions about the nature of the materials and potential intellectual property issues. While the content contained within a platform such as Facebook may be of long-term value, the “wrapper,” that is Facebook, is intellectual property owned by Facebook, falling under American intellectual property legislation and subject to permissions that have not been forthcoming.493

The findings of this study suggest that as individuals shift their practices with the use of social media—often in efforts to increase collaboration and support ease of communication—the outputs that are generated in these platforms as a result of these

492 Interviews with I004, I021, and I024.
493 Interviews with I021 and I024.
practices pose new hurdles for existing records systems and policy instruments. This work has surfaced evidence that these technologies and the practices they support disrupt status quo work practices, potentially at a pace that challenges the current policy and recordkeeping systems to catch up.

4.6 Organizational Capacities

The theme of information/records management and archives capacities surfaced in relation to records generators and those responsible for recordkeeping and archives with regard to the usefulness of existing policy instruments, recordkeeping workflows and recordkeeping and archives technologies.

In my analysis of GC’s information management policy instruments, I found that they do not take into account the fluid nature of emerging ICTs such as social media, the characteristics of the products they generate, and/or the complexities of capture and preservation, key components of information and records management. For example, the 2011 “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0” stated: “federal program information posted to Web 2.0 tools and services needs to be captured in departmental information repository as a record of the information on the program that has been distributed to Canadians.”

However, there was no guidance within the information management policy suite on how to do this or what are the best tools to facilitate capture and preservation. The posting to social media by communications public servants was usually pre-scripted and often linked to other

494 Canada, TBS 2011, “External Use of Web 2.0.” The guideline was issued in November 2011 and rescinded in June 2014.
types of communications media so, according to a number of interviewees, it was not viewed
as necessary to capture the content within the social media platforms themselves.495

The 2007 “Policy on Information Management” and the 2009 “Directive on
Recordkeeping,” both mandatory policy instruments within the information management
policy suite, outlined the essential nature and importance of information and records to the
ongoing effectiveness of government.496 According to the directive:

Information resources of business value include published and unpublished materials,
regardless of medium or form, that are created or acquired because they enable
decision making and the delivery of programs, services and ongoing operations, and
support departmental reporting, performance and accountability requirements. An
information resource identified as having business value and placed into a repository
enables effective decision making and provides reliable evidence of business
decisions, activities and transaction, for program managers, deputy heads, ministers,
and Canadian citizens.497

The policy, which is to be read in conjunction with the directive, does not directly address
social media content, but does make the distinction between records and “documents, data,
library services, information architecture, etc.” This policy refers to information

technologies:

As the Government of Canada increasingly uses information technologies to
implement these requirements, integrating information management requirements
with technology planning ensures that digital information is accessible, shareable, and
usable over time and through technological change.498

The accompanying voluntary guideline, “A Guideline for Employees of the Government of
Canada: Information Management (IM) Basics” contains the subsection: “A Word About

495 Interviews with I007 and I011.
496 See Appendix B for a fuller explanation of the GC’s policy framework.
Wikis, Blogs, and Collaborative Spaces.” This brief section draws attention to the likelihood that these environments will host “business-related activities,” but gives more attention to how these tools should be used rather than concrete advice on managing the information assets they are likely to contain.499

The above analysis of the policy instruments suggests an awareness of the role of emerging and changing technologies on information and records management in the GC; however, these instruments fail to take into account that adoption and use of these technologies often precede “technology planning [that] ensures that digital information is accessible, shareable, and usable over time,”500 and, while public servants may have the knowledge to identify information assets of business value in platforms such as social media, they have not been provided with the guidance and/or tools that ensures the long-term preservation and contextual understanding of these information assets.

Policy analysis as well as interview data revealed the importance of the role of the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (ATIP) with regard to social media. For example, departmental wikis, GCPedia, and instant messages information are subject to ATIP requests. As is emphasized in the quote below from the Information Commissioner, government information and records subject to ATIP requests have an expectation of accessibility, completeness and expedient availability. In 2013, the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada undertook an investigation of the practices of eleven institutions and various ministerial offices across the GC with regard to the use of instant text-based

messages on wireless devices, including communications to and from BlackBerrys using their unique personal identification number. The Commissioner concluded that widely divergent practices and training existed amongst users and, in the majority of cases, unlike emails, these messages were not automatically stored in departmental repositories, lessening the likelihood that they could or would be retrieved under ATIP requests:

We have concerns that the absence of any TBS policy instrument that requires instant messages to be preserved for a reasonable period does not adequately safeguard the right of access under the *Access to Information Act*. Reliance on the goodwill of individual public servants and ministerial staff to identify, save and store records of business value is insufficient to address the risk that information that should be subject to the Act will be lost without a means of being recovered or retrieved.501

The Office of the Commissioner found that policy gaps and the absence of technical safeguards meant that “instant messaging presents an unacceptable risk to the right of access to information,” “inconsistent policies and guidance do not sufficiently address the risk of access,” and “current treatment of instant messaging renders independent oversight ineffective.”502

In this same investigation, the Office of the Commissioner invoked the government’s “duty to document” its electronic and verbal exchanges of information, noting:

The whole scheme of the Access to Information Act depends on records being created, properly indexed and filed, readily retrievable, appropriately archived and carefully assessed before destruction to ensure that valuable information is not lost. If records about particular subjects are not created, or if they cannot be readily located and produced, the right of access is meaningless. The right of access is not all that is at risk. So, too, is our ability as a nation to preserve, celebrate and learn from our history. So, too, is our government’s ability to deliver good governance to the citizenry.503

502 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, 11, 15.
503 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, 18.
Recommendations from the Commissioner included Parliamentary revisions to the *Access to Information Act* to address the duty to document as well as indication to the TBS to develop and implement government-wide policy governing the use and preservation of instant messages.\(^{504}\) In a response to the recommendations, the President of the Treasury Board agreed to the need for mandatory training for all users of government issued devices, yet noted what he believed to be the transitory nature of instant messages stating:

> Non-email text-based messaging services such as pin-to-pin are a means of informal communication that are inherently transitory in nature. I nevertheless acknowledge that non-transitory records of business value, which are the exception in non-email text-based messaging, must be preserved, for example by being forwarded into the email system.\(^{505}\)

While there is mention of the need to preserve records of business value, there is an ongoing lack of technological and policy instruments to support such preservation and an implicit belief that instant messages are transitory and “informal” communication. Despite the rising use of mobile and “social” technologies to communication, generate content, and conduct business in government, there remains an impetus for these digital products to remain ephemeral.

Several interviewees were critical of the GC’s existing capacities regarding information and records management, particularly regarding the secure management of digital information.\(^{506}\) One participant described it as a losing battle, with the GC still making decisions regarding information management from a paper paradigm, arguing that the GC

\(^{504}\) Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, 19.
\(^{505}\) Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, 20.
\(^{506}\) Interviews with I008 and I028.
has not really made the shift to a digital mindset. Policy instruments and guidance around information and records management were considered to be rooted in a paper mindset and failing to take into account the work practices that accompany the use of digital technologies, and even less so emerging social media tools. The traditional reaction to non-compliant information and records management practices, for example, the requirement to delete all drafts, has been to force public servants to comply with policy, an approach that over the years has proved to be ineffectual. In light of this, it is tempting for the GC to view social media content as transitory, however, it is likely this framing is inaccurate and potentially unfeasible in relation to information and records management requirements.

Manifestations of information/records were seen by interviewees as more malleable and in-flux as they moved away from analog, non-networked, single user information generation tools to more collaborative and cooperative tools. However, the policy instruments that support information management and recordkeeping did not support such a shift in practices. During the time the majority of interviews were conducted (interviews were conducted between September 2013–June 2014, with the majority taking place September through November 2013), a move to government department repositories within what was labelled GCDocs was underway. A number of participants were not yet sure how this move could support the capture and preservation of social media, with some

---

507 Interview with I008.
508 Interviews with I008 and I028.
509 Interview with I008.
510 Interview with I008.
511 Interviews with I005, I006, I012, and I013.
expressing skepticism towards the new repository tool. The consensus was that records or information of business value or “final” documents were to be removed from collaborative work spaces, saved (e.g. via pasting into a Word document) and moved into a departmental repository such as GCDocs; however, there was awareness that this was not sufficient for social media content. Unlike more static analogue content, social media content is viewed as “activity streams” that have complex interactive elements and metadata, often hidden from the front end and/or inaccessible. This gap was mentioned by one participant, who stated “we are not there yet” in response to the need to address the departmental use of social media and the products such use generates. The need was further articulated in documentation that examined wiki use across government departments. There was a need “to find ways to make sense of the large influx of information and opinion that could potentially paralyze the governance system.”

One participant noted that the “sacred cows” of records management and records definitions need to be re-examined in the context of a more interactive and collaborative civil service to ensure that the information (and potential records) that are being created in collaborative systems can be better identified and managed for long-term value.

A number of interviewees expressed a lack of knowledge and/or guidance regarding potential information management responsibilities with regard to social media generated

512 See, for example: Interview with I008.
514 Interviews with I005 and I008.
515 Canada, Policy Horizons 2011, Governing by Wiki, 18.
516 Interview with I028.
content. While all participants were well-versed in the policy instruments that applied to their roles, and the importance of “information of business value,” some participants reported the need to integrate and process greater amounts and varieties of information due to collaborative tools and not having a full understanding about the information management implications of this data: “So the data is there, it’s all there, it’s not going anywhere, but managing the data from an electronic perspective … Especially from the wiki perspective we don’t have much guidance. We just accumulate it and that’s about it.”

The interview findings revealed that the existence of information and records management challenges is often linked to a departmental culture of how information is viewed. Additionally, analysis revealed inconsistencies in the definition of records and/or between policy instruments.

4.6.1 Ad Hoc Information Management and Preservation Practices

Several interviewees reported ad hoc “archiving” practices that saw them (as individual actors) collect and preserve social media content to be used for future reference. I025 discussed preserving wiki content on an annual basis as time and resources allowed. While there was no longer-term disposition plan for the wiki data, such measures were seen as stop gaps that allowed the data to be preserved for the short to medium term.

517 Interviews with I005, I008, I012, and I025.
518 Interview with I025.
519 Interview with I008.
520 Interview with I025.
recognition on the part of I025 that there is a need to “rethink” information management in light of a drive to carry out an increasing number of functions in collaborative workspaces.

The community of government social media enthusiasts often saw longer-term value in the social media content they created.\textsuperscript{521} Community members took the initiative to preserve and share conversations they saw as valuable to the broader community of public servants on social media, for example using a platform such as Storify to aggregate a Twitter conversation from an event or surrounding a particular topic.\textsuperscript{522} A number of participants reported this type of curation of social media content by public servants as a means of grassroots information management.\textsuperscript{523} How this data would then go on to be used more broadly seemed to be still a question. The need for tools and policy instruments to “catch up” to the use of collaborative technologies was also among the findings.\textsuperscript{524}

The ability of current government recordkeeping and preservation instruments and tools to address the evolving social media practices of public servants would appear to be rapidly falling behind advances in technology and practice based on interview and policy analysis data. There was an awareness amongst participants that the internal instruments and tools were not yet where they needed to be, and some were developing practices to compensate for the potential loss of what they saw as valuable information.

\textsuperscript{521} See, for example: Interviews with I002, I007, and I025.
\textsuperscript{522} Interview with I025. Storify is a social media tool that allows users to created stories or timelines using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.
\textsuperscript{523} Interviews with I002 and I025.
\textsuperscript{524} Interviews with I003, I014, and I015.
4.7 Contested Status

Amongst interviewees, the data revealed a lack of consensus on whether records or information of business value were being generated with social media. While some interviewees were of the view that information generated in social media was transitory, based primarily on the medium in which it is created, others were quick to point out that early adopters, innovators and “digital natives,” use social media for a variety of functions that traditionally were carried out on internal platforms, potentially generating information of business value.

Participant accounts revealed an ongoing focus on the medium when they conveyed their opinions of products generated with social media versus the functions these uses serve. For example, I009 stated that all instant messages were transitory regardless of content. Yet, the Canadian government’s Chief Information Officer has consistently sounded the alarm about the lack of preservation of Blackberry messages in relation to the government’s duty to document its decision-making processes and records preservation obligations, noting that these communications are records of the GC.

Some participants discussed their own or their department’s increased use of instant messaging. One interviewee noted a move within the department to remove all transitory communication from email stated that the introduction of internal instant messaging was an initial step in this direction—using instant messaging to replace transitory email.

525 See, for example: Interview with I009.
526 See, for example: Interviews with I001, I002, I005, I010, and I022.
527 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, Access to Information at Risk.
According to I012, the introduction of this procedure was to reduce email use and management needs; however, as instant messaging was seen as a medium for transitory communication, there was no plan for its ongoing management or preservation.

A number of participants viewed social media content via a “paper lens,” or what was a continuous translation of comparing social media generated content to paper-based documents. These views surfaced in explanations that referenced pulling content from its social media platform and pasting it into a Word document in order to preserve it. Also distinguishing between “documents” generated on a wiki as being of potential information of business value, whereas those generated in Twitter or Facebook, were seen as transitory solely based on the platform they were generated in.

Some participants expressed the feeling that the lines between information and records were blurring, particularly in relation to digital materials. Others expressed the need for a re-examination of what they saw as rigid definitions within the information and archives domains in order to address the management needs for these materials.

There is a lack of consensus on the potential long-term value of records and information generated in social media platforms amongst public servants interviewed. The variation between participants and their views on the value of social media generated content was informed by both their own experience with social media platforms and their perceptions of others’ social media practices.

528 Interview with I012.
529 See, for example: Interviews with I008, I021, I027, and I028.
530 Interviews with I027 and I028.
4.8 Role of Policy

This theme discusses the role of policy in the adoption, use, and management of social media in the GC.

Since 2008, the Treasury Board has issued a number of government-wide policy instruments governing social media in the GC. The first policy instrument that addressed internal social media tools was issued in November 2008: the “Guideline to Acceptable Use of Internal Wikis and Blogs Within the Government of Canada.”\(^{531}\) The “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0,” issued November 18, 2011, three years later, was the first government-wide instrument to address the use of external social media tools.\(^{532}\) This guideline was replaced by two new policy instruments in 2013, GANDU—which supports PANDU—and the “Guideline on Official Use of Social Media.”\(^{533}\) Additionally, the “Standard on Social Media Account Management” came into effect 1 April 2013.\(^{534}\)

The findings from documentary analysis demonstrate that the TBS CIOB recognized the increased use of social media in the GC by departments and individuals, the issues it surfaced, and the necessity for government wide policy instruments to “help drive balance between productivity, innovation and risk” and “provide guidance on the appropriate use of Web 2.0 tools.”\(^{535}\) TBS CIOB acknowledged that social media use by GC agencies and

\(^{531}\) This policy instrument was rescinded on June 30, 2016. Canada, TBS 2016, “Use of Internal Wikis and Blogs.”

\(^{532}\) This policy instrument was rescinded on June 9, 2014. Canada, TBS 2011, “External Use of Web 2.0.”

\(^{533}\) This policy instrument was rescinded on May 11, 2016. Interview with I011; Canada, TBS 2014, “Official Use of Social Media.”

\(^{534}\) This policy instrument was rescinded on May 11, 2016. Canada, TBS 2014, “Social Media Account Management.”

\(^{535}\) Squire and Androsoff 2013, “Social Networks for Government of Canada Employees.”
individual public servants brought with it “significant benefits” as well as questions. TBS CIOB viewed social media as “key to advancing priorities” such as effective communications and quality service delivery to Canadians. As increasing numbers of Canadians take to social media, the GC foresees an increased use in interactions between the GC and Canadian citizens. In a document produced at the end of 2013 discussing the “GC 2.0 policy context,” the TBS CIOB admitted that its policy initiatives needed to address key challenges, including:

- Open access to internal and external web 2.0 tools and services via GC electronic networks varied across departments;
- Siloed approach to official use of social media across GC departments;
- Lack of clear standards to easily identify official GC social media accounts on third-party platforms.

The following two subsections discuss the frictions that surfaced in the process of initial social media policy development within the GC and the perceived bandwagon-style adoption of social media by government at higher levels.

---

536 Squire and Androsoff 2013.
537 Squire and Androsoff 2013.
538 Squire and Androsoff 2013.
539 Early in my research for this study, I explored the bandwagon effect as a possible theoretical lens to examine social media adoption in government. I subsequently chose to adopt a practice approach for this study, but I find utility in referencing the bandwagon effect as an aid in explaining what a number of interviewees articulated in relation to the GC's approach to adoption of social media. For an overview, see: Schmitt-Beck 2015, “Bandwagon Effect.”
4.8.1  Frictions in the Process

The sub-theme of frictions in the policy process manifest in two main ways. First, the interview findings revealed frictions in the policy development process with regard to the generation of social media policy instruments. Attempted innovation in the policy process was seen to be hampered by entrenched bureaucratic policy structures. Second, social media tools were perceived as being co-opted by more formal entities, such as ministerial committees, and this was understood by interviewees as an attempt by the GC to be perceived as being innovative. Participants reported skepticism in the policy development process around the GC’s official adoption of emergent ICTs, particularly social media.

Interviewees spoke particularly to the development of the “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0,” which was informally initiated in 2008 but was not completed until four years later in 2011. Due to the nature of social media platforms and their perceived socio-cultural and political status, as well as their associated potential risks, interviewees suggested that the policy instruments addressing social media use attracted more scrutiny at higher levels within the GC than similar policy instruments at the same level. As the “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0” was the first TBS policy instrument issued on the use of external social media tools, it received additional multi-level attention. As I003 stated:

It is just a guideline; it is a non-mandatory policy, which usually doesn’t require that much consultation. But that one went up to the Deputy Ministers for consultation. It was announced by the Minister. November 2011 when it finally got announced—Tony Clement, the Minister at that point, announced it publicly. Pretty rare to have a Minister announcing a non-mandatory guideline. Part of it was, it really was the first time TBS was putting any kind of policy instrument about the use of social media out.

Interviews with I011 and I022.
According to I003, despite the “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0” being a non-mandatory guideline, it briefly put social media in the policy spotlight and created broader awareness at a number of levels:

Even though a guideline is not mandatory, even the process of getting it in front of senior management, not only TBS, but Deputy Ministers across government, getting the Ministers office involved in it—it was the first time that social media from a TBS perspective was being put high on their radar. So to some degree the process of getting it through that system was really important to help educate and put it [social media] on the radar of people in a way that it hadn’t been before.  

Another interviewee suggested that the decision to make this inaugural policy instrument a non-mandatory guideline was predicated on the idea that a guideline that was solely applied to social media could stand on its own and would aid public servants in understanding how a social media use policy potentially interacted with other legislation and policy instruments, and how to think about their use of social media in their roles and work practices.  

A number of participants reported on the slow pace at which policy development occurred in the GC. As I003 stated, it can “often be a pretty long arduous process.” I011 gave the example of PANDU. Updated in 2013, this policy document replaced an earlier policy on the use of electronic networks, which had not been revised since 1998. Significant developments in terms of networked digital systems and platforms had occurred during this gap.

Interview findings revealed that the beginnings of what would become the “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0” started informally in 2008 through collaborations by a group of GC public servants who were early social media users. This early group utilized social media

541 Interview with I003.
542 Interview with I011.
tools, particularly the newly introduced internal government wiki GCPedia, to research, collaborate on and draft a report on the policy implications of social media use in the GC.\textsuperscript{543} Research included consulting other jurisdictions’ social media use, policies and policy development processes, and identifying the issues salient to inclusion in a social media policy instrument for the GC.\textsuperscript{544} A document called “Considerations of Social Media Use in Government” was given to TBS in 2009. This document became the foundation for the “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0.” However, it wasn’t until November 2011 that the official guideline would be issued. As mentioned earlier, the nature of social media and the perceived issues surrounding it necessitated this inaugural TBS policy instrument to go through additional consultation at a number of levels of government administration, slowing down the process. In the opinion of a number of interviewees, this was counterintuitive to the more rapid pace of adoption and use of social media tools occurring in the GC landscape. Upon examination in a broader international context, the GC issuing of this policy instrument in 2011 lagged behind other similar national jurisdictions in issuing government social media policy instruments. The New Zealand government, which was considered to have the “gold standard” of social media policy instruments, issued its initial policies in 2009; the UK and the US would follow in 2010.

According to I001, the social media policy research work that utilized GCPedia, the result of which would go on to inform the official TBS policy instrument, was one of the initial broader grassroots approaches within the GC that utilized social media practices to

\textsuperscript{543} Interview with I001.
\textsuperscript{544} Interview with I022.
collaborate, and it was not without friction and organizational culture implications. This early emergence of social media practices highlights an internal shift in practices and has users, through their regularized engagement with these social media technologies, enacting “technologies-in-practice.” These practices initiated a recognition of the need to permeate departmental silos and facilitate a shift towards cross governmental collaboration that supported how individual public servants were actually collaborating and sharing information. However, according to interviewees, it would still be a number of years until such tools and practices were adopted into the GC work practices.

The data revealed slow progress in getting innovation into the policy development process when it came to the social media policy instruments. The Social Media Policy Development Committee was formed to investigate the potential use of social media technologies in policy development. A number of participants likened the committee’s mandate to reinventing the wheel. They were critical of what they viewed as a naïve approach to “crowdsourcing” policy development: “We’re really good at talking about innovation. We’re really bad about implementing innovation.” Participants noted that policy development has more complexity than just attempting to design Twitter acceptable use, and further, policy development in the GC involves a plethora of approaches depending on the department or agency undertaking it. According to one interviewee, the GC does not

546 Interview with I001.
547 The Social Media Policy Development Committee was renamed the Deputy Minister Committee on Policy Innovation in December 2013 in a broadening of its mandate to include new and emergent technologies beyond just social media.
548 Interviews with I020 and I022.
549 Interview with I022.
have one policy framework. It has as many policy frameworks as there are senior analysts in government. Thus, there is no one universal model for policy development.550

Policy instruments were viewed by participants as what shapes and governs the roles and responsibilities of the public servants. The interviews suggest recognition on the part of public servants that policy instruments are binding and hold a great amount of authority in their enacted work environment. According to I025, the majority of public servants are tasked with implementing policy rather than contributing to its development: “The reality on the ground is we don’t design policy, we are given policy to implement. So it’s a big shift … the shift should be towards how to implement policy.”551

Frictions were surfaced as some perceived the social media policy practices that were being enacted by public servants, as being shoehorned into a more bureaucratic process—possibly due to the inaugural nature of the social media policy instrument under discussion. Additionally, the bandwagon approach to onboarding social media tools in the policy-making infrastructure was perceived by some participants as coopting an ongoing set of developing and interconnected practices in potentially superficial ways.

4.8.2 Partial Policy

In discussing the GC policy instruments, some participants viewed the web and, by extension, social media as a “channel” that carries government information. Thus, they were keen to explain the ways in which a complex variety of overlapping and layered policy

550 Interview with I025
551 Interview with I025.
instruments apply. While the TBS is the official GC policy issuing and monitoring authority, it is cognizant of the variety of obligations and restrictions GC agencies may fall under depending on their remit and scope. This necessitates a broad policy approach that allows agencies to enact TBS policy instruments within their context and develop rules that are relevant to their environment. Across government, the Privacy Act, the Access to Information Act and the Official Languages Act were all cited as applicable in addition to each agency’s own regulatory frameworks.

In contrast, some participants reported a perception that policy instruments failed to consider the nature of the practices that social media tools support and did not allow for a nuanced understanding of the online digital environment and its evolving practices. The “dos and don’ts” in the policies with regard to identifying oneself as a public servant, etc. are prevalent, whereas the spirit of the cultural shift that social media supports is lost.552

A lack of understanding of the role of pseudonymity and anonymity in the online environment surfaced in the rulemaking for public servants’ online behaviours: policies did not take into account the need for consideration of subtle activities, such as identity management.553 For example, the “loyalty” clause in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada’s internal policy instrument did not allow for any criticism of the government; this, taken in conjunction with the reported malleability between public servants’ professional and personal use of platforms such as Twitter, failed to address the ability to engage a variety of audiences in multiple contexts while still using the same social

552 See, for example: Interviews with I002 and I025.
553 Interview with I002.
media platforms. The networked nature of social media tools allowed for “connecting of the dots.” To identify individuals and their roles via multiple online profiles is easy and, as one interviewee put it, if one doesn’t have a large footprint online, then this is often not a problem, as it goes unnoticed. However, if one gains enough followers and generates a dialogue, then departmental or agency rules on issues such as public discourse and criticism may be applied more stringently.

The interviews highlighted a perceived lack of rigorous policy instruments coupled with a bureaucratic culture that did not understand, or failed to recognize, the affordances of social media platforms, contributing, in their view, to an incomplete and unsatisfying policy environment.

4.9 Institutionalized Tensions

The majority of participants explicitly reported issues of organizational culture. The analysis of documentary data further revealed implicit indicators of organizational culture issues, specifically related to bureaucratic and professional tensions. These frictions also surfaced in the interview findings, particularly in connection to the introduction of digital and social media tools and practices into structured hierarchical government and professional spaces.

Several participants spoke to the deep-rooted hierarchies in the GC and the power structures that support their continued existence. Most participants indicated that a shift in

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is now Employment and Social Development Canada.

Interview with I002.
culture was required to accommodate the shift in information practices, but many stated that such entrenched culture is difficult to uproot. Findings revealed that the often ad hoc and grassroots incorporation of social media technologies into daily work practices in government agencies brought to the surface frictions between those who saw themselves as early adopters who wanted to move away from a paper model to a digital one and the existing policy infrastructures relating to recordkeeping that mandated the use of a particular set of technologies to ensure compliance and preservation.557

Interviews revealed frictions between the introduction of social media platforms and existing hierarchical environments within departments. As I008 observed, initial department excitement around the introduction of a wiki that facilitated information sharing and the advancement of collective knowledge never took root as the system of workflows and practices was based on a hierarchical process that “never went away.”

Participants regarded the adoption of social media by public servants as a means of pushing against or circumventing the hierarchical government information flows, which they described as traditionally closed and tightly controlled:

Because they [public servants] believe in making things better, you know they believe in sharing, they believe that this is how we make a better world, this is how we make a better government, right? We don’t do it by being afraid and closing off our information, we do it by sharing and expressing opinion and arguing with people, politely, respectfully, right?558

A number of participants expressed a desire to effect change within the bureaucracy of the GC of Canada via social media use. As I003 stated, “it’s been a fascinating experience …

557 Interviews with I008 and I023.
558 Interview with I001.
trying to be a bit of that agent of change inside the bureaucracy—to shift how it’s working a
little bit and bring some of these pieces into how we do business.”

Early policy instruments spoke to an awareness on the part of the GC of the potential
organizational culture issues that accompany social media use. The following appears under
the “Context” section in the “Guideline to Acceptable Use of Internal Wikis and Blogs
Within the Government of Canada” issued in 2008:

The use of wikis and blogs is new to the Government of Canada, and all groups will
face challenges as they learn how to use these tools to build active communities and
encourage participation.

Web 2.0 and other collaborative technologies pose a new challenge to norms. Society
and technology are ever-changing, and the Government of Canada needs to adapt to
these changes while still respecting existing laws, policies, directives, and standards.

Bottom-up use of social media by public servants lives alongside the command-and-control
GC framework administered by the TBS.

While the issue of organizational culture appeared throughout the interviews in a
number of areas, it consistently surfaced with regard to the elected government’s practices of
controlling information and the impacts of the administration of government on moving
agendas forward. A number of participants spoke fondly of the early days of social media
experimentation in 2007/2008 and noted a broad shift in government culture—the claim to
examine social media as a tool of government was seen by early adopters as a bit of a “too
little, too late” approach, with many of them “moving on” to innovations such as open data
and open government, where they felt they could be innovative and best serve Canadians.

Several participants discussed the power attached to controlling information and the
information chain in the GC. As I008 highlighted, traditionally these were very structured
processes that facilitated the manipulation of content in service to particular messaging; often
this was linked to political positioning. There was a culture of information and knowledge as power in GC agencies, with information as a means of maintaining a competitive advantage.\footnote{Interview with I008.} It was in part due to hierarchy, but also a lack of openness with regard to information sharing. The views of content ownership and control prohibited participation in social media environments such as wikis by some individual public servants.\footnote{See, for example: Interview with I008.} Many of those public servants who rose up in the GC hierarchical ranks were coming face to face with those coming behind them who saw open access to information as the way forward. There were strains between the two models—one viewing information as power and gaining access to it as earned and potentially something to be guarded, and the other seeing information as open to everyone in environments that are collaborative and have horizontal work practices and information sharing as their foundation.\footnote{See, for example: Interviews with I001 and I002.}

I002 discussed the Blackberry culture in the GC as a way of maintaining a closed and privileged access to information environment. The public servants with Blackberries had access to a network that facilitated private messaging and information in that environment. There was a perception that the Blackberry culture in the GC supported a dynamic of information as power versus internal and external social media tools, which facilitated information as free ethos. The system was designed around an information as power model so the introduction of work practices and tools that better facilitated information sharing
across traditionally siloed communities, inter-, intra- and external to government, was disruptive to the status quo. 562

A number of participants noted that issues of organizational culture at LAC halted much of the progress on web capture as well as work around issues of emerging technologies and their impact on digital preservation. 563 A perceived lack of resources at LAC, coupled with organizational culture, has meant that the move towards a focus on the digital, what it means and how to gather digital content for preservation, was slow in comparison to other similar national institutions. The federal web renewal initiative in 2013 required swift action on the part of staff at LAC to capture all of the web content before it disappeared with major changes to the GC website. 564 Prior to this action, the web harvesting and preservation program had been on a hiatus since 2009, which interview data revealed was primarily due to broader organizational cultural issues. The merging of the national library and archives in 2004 continued to loom in the background, with interviewees referencing frictions between the two professional group models (librarians and archivists) and their approaches to digital information management and preservation.

The data revealed the presence of knowledge and digital literacy gaps amongst public servants. A number of participants referenced a “paper mindset,” characteristic of those in the public service whose comfort levels and knowledge of digital technologies were limited and who preferred analogue and hierarchical approaches to information management. This stance resulted in frictions when met with emerging digital based and often collaborative

562 Interview with I002.
563 Interviews with I021, I023, and I024.
564 Interview with I021.
practices of many early adopters. As one participant put it, the “divide” is not necessarily generational, but lines up more with levels of comfort regarding new technologies.

4.10 Summary

This chapter introduced the major themes that developed during data analysis. It has highlighted how the adoption and use of emerging ICTs in the GC informed existing work practices and informed policy processes. By describing the issues surrounding the adoption and use of social media within a particular organizational context, the chapter demonstrates how this appropriation can be both enabling and disruptive to traditional information and records generating activities. The chapter examined the relationship between social media adoption and policy generating practices and instruments, particularly those policy instruments developed to address the implications of ICT use, revealing discord in the policy development process and tensions that surfaced surrounding the status of information generated in social media platforms, the disruptive nature of these digital objects, and the information and records management and preservation challenges their use poses. Finally, this chapter identified challenges that surfaced in relation to traditional government information processes and hierarchies in light of increased social media use amongst public servants in both their daily work practices and professional roles. Chapter five will contextualize these findings in relation to the literature reviewed and the research questions that guided the study.

See, for example: Interviews with IO01 and IO08.

Interview with IO01.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter engages the main findings of this project in conversation with the research questions that guided this study and the literature reviewed in chapter two. It frames the significance of this study and reflects on its contributions to theory, policy and practice.

A significant motivator for this study resides in my interest in the insights and observations of individuals negotiating emerging social media practices (e.g. the systems, tools, expectations, norms, and policies) in relation to the research questions posed. I am driven to gain insight into the overall phenomena of these negotiated practices and how the outcomes of this process influence future generations’ ability to hold governments accountable through stored records. As new digital systems and tools continue to emerge, this research study seeks to learn from the experiences of those adapting their practices within the complexity of their daily professional lives. I recognize that continually shifting socio-technical systems and an evolving political landscape are a reality; however, using a practice lens to gain insight into the adaptive practices studied through this project may surface a method to assist those individuals and organizations who hold the responsibility of adapting in the face of continually developing technologies.

5.2 Findings in Conversation with Research Questions

The goal of this research study was to investigate the early adoption of social media as experienced by federal government actors and the impacts of negotiating these adapting
practices on the generation, management and retention of government produced social media information, records, and their related policies.

During the data collection phase of this project (primarily 2013), social media was viewed in a variety of ways by users and non-users. For example, there was a common “who’s going to be interested in what someone had for breakfast years from now?” reaction to the long-term value of posts on Twitter. This attitude is in stark contrast to the current necessity proposed by archivists to preserve and study the US Presidential use of social media. This view arose from observation of the impact of the sitting President’s vociferous Twitter activities and of Barack Obama’s [innovative] use of the platform, for which he was deemed the first “social media” president. Additionally, during the initial collection phase, social media platforms were viewed by many as a tool to “democratize” access to and use of information. The social media adopters interviewed for the study often spoke of social media and the accompanying ethos as tools to break down the hierarchies and silos of government held information and aid in facilitating greater transparency and access.

While it would be inappropriate to view the findings of this research project anachronistically, there has been a considerable shift in discourse and research with regard to social media in the last few years. Research and dialogue surrounding social media platforms, their for-profit models, the lack of neutrality and transparency of platforms, and the complexity of social media technologies with regard to longer-term consequences of their

567 CNBC 2009, “Pointless Babble.”
569 Hemsley et al. 2018, “Social Good or Evil.”
use in government have all been surfaced. I have benefited from these scholarly conversations and shifting understandings since the time of data collection. The discourse around research into social media use continues to expand in breadth and depth, and time has afforded me a perspective that is unique in relation to the data collected and the evolving practices and attitudes regarding social media, specifically in government. This subsequent engagement with conversations and literature since the formation of the research questions and data collection (2013–2014) has informed the analysis undertaken and conclusions drawn in this study.

Through the following sections, the specific research questions outlined in the introduction re-enter the conversation.

5.2.1 Research Question One

*How was social media used by GC public servants as it became widespread in society?*

This question aimed to explore the social media practices of federal government agencies and individual public servants and how these practices informed, and were informed by, information flows and processes.

The research results indicate an uptake of new social media technologies by public servants in their professional roles in efforts to facilitate less hierarchical and more

---

570 A number of highly publicized social media breaches as well as ongoing scholarship questioning the power of these platforms in the public sphere have gained widespread attention. See, for example: The Guardian 2018, “Cambridge Analytica Files” for the data breach affecting the personal data of over 50 million Facebook profiles; Hughes 2019, “Break Up Facebook” for increased momentum in the public questioning of the unchecked power of social media platforms; Vaidhyanathan 2019, “Dear Mr. Zuckerberg” and 2018, *Anti-Social Media*; Solon 2018, “Data Is a Fingerprint”; Baym 2015, “Social Media.”
collaborative and participatory information flows in their professional practices; however, this use continued to take place within a public service environment during this time period that privileged a hierarchical information and policy framework. There was a consistently strong attitude amongst the majority of public servants interviewed that their uptake and ongoing use of social media allowed them to work more effectively in service to Canadians. This was exemplified for many interviewees in their reflections on the implementation and eventual uptake of the GC’s internal wiki GCPedia. The continued growth in use of GCPedia for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and co-creation across government exemplifies what is possible internally to support public servants’ desires for such tools. Public servants’ earnestness was paired with frustration, as discussed in chapter four, resulting from frictions in the existing systems that failed to fully support the nature and affordances of the social media platforms. For example, public servants who used GCPedia to generate a social media policy instrument, were frustrated when it was redirected into the more traditional policy generating stream, eventually taking an extended period of time and changing in the process.

Social media was introduced into the GC both officially and unofficially, with the former primarily representing agency use and the latter individual use. Officially, uptake was primarily via the communications units, and unofficially, it was adopted in a bottom-up approach by individual public servants. The findings from the preliminary study of official agency social media accounts indicated the majority of this use was communicative, in line with agency communications messaging. These findings are in line with Mergel, who found the majority of US government social media use was to communicate existing

571 Shaffer, Freund, and Welch 2013, “Tweeting the Government.”
information and services to citizens, with a dearth of government social media use enacting any meaningful government citizen engagement.572

The research findings suggest that participants enthusiastically engaged with social media platforms, often unofficially, in their professional roles, seeking to practice what they perceived as the spirit of social media platforms in efforts to better engage and network both within and outside of government agencies.573 While the government rhetoric driving agency adoption of social media platforms was that of greater openness and access, the influence of the government hierarchy, top-down decision making and entrenched bureaucracy influenced the pace of adoption and challenged existing information frameworks and practices. These findings also align with those of Mergel,574 who observed that social media adoption in government is impacted by “institutional and organizational mechanisms that direct the degree and extent of adoption.”575 She found that, “institutional norms and regulations evolve as social media practices emerge and administrative needs evolve.”576 While Mergel’s adoption model helps to explain the adoption of social media technologies in government, how they take shape and work their way into more entrenched and daily information practices, it is limited in its application to the Canadian context at the time of study. The Westminster model of governance in the Canadian system that Roy describes as “inward and control-oriented” fosters a view towards information and communication that supports a

572 Mergel 2016, “Social Media Institutionalization.”
573 See discussion of #w2p Twitter community in chapter four.
576 Mergel 2016.
culture of containment, which is antithetical to the ethos of social media platforms. Findings point to an information culture in the GC at the time of data collection that was linked to power dynamics and that was politically influenced.

The impact of the GC hierarchical and command-and-control approach to information can be construed as the elephant in the room in relation to social media. The interview findings surfaced what one participant termed the “Blackberry culture” in the GC. Those who were senior in the GC hierarchy were issued Blackberries and linked into a communication and information sharing network that was viewed as nested in power dynamics. This example served to articulate a running theme of information linked to power dynamics and the disruption caused by technology appropriation. Introducing work practices and tools that better facilitate information sharing across traditionally siloed communities—inter-, intra- and external to government—is perceived as disruptive to the status quo, despite the growing and arguably widespread use in the GC at this time.

The research findings indicate the presence of boundary frictions, particularly between the use of internal versus external social media platforms, and the ongoing intersections between the personal and professional use of social media platforms. The interview findings suggest a desire on the part of public servants to utilize their personal social media accounts (e.g. Twitter) to engage in professional activities and conversations. These findings agree with those drawn by Rooksby and Sommerville in 2012: that there are

578 Interviews with I001 and I002; Manasan 2015, “Muzzling Government Scientists.”
579 Interview with I002.
580 Interview with I002.
no hard and fast delineations between social networking “inside” and “outside” the organization. Additionally, their conclusions highlight a blending of work and social use of social media platforms by public servants, which this research also supports.\footnote{Rooksby and Sommerville 2012, “Social Network Sites.”} The interview findings demonstrated a desire on the part of some public servants to use social media in service to government transparency and greater access to information. Some public servants employed workarounds with regard to collaboration, information sharing and communication to circumvent and advocate for change in a closed information system in order to engage what they perceived as valuable tools that allowed them to do their jobs better.

In addition to being the beneficiaries of external information sharing, several participants noted that bringing awareness to internal information also influenced their presence on external social media sites such as Twitter. Internal GC 2.0 tools were only available to public servants behind the GC firewall. Some interviewees pointed out that information in GCPedia is subject to access and privacy legislation and therefore available to citizen requests.\footnote{The Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act apply to information on internal government social media platforms (e.g. departmental wikis, GCPedia).} As one interviewee noted, while not all Twitter followers may be able to access an internal GC link posted in a tweet, they would now be aware of its existence. This supports the finding that participants engaged in professional use of social media platforms are keen to manipulate its use in service to greater transparency, information sharing, and “democratization” of government information. This research demonstrated the organizational
complexity of information workflows within government agencies and their influence on social media practices, which reinforces conclusions drawn by Rooksby and Sommerville.583

The construction of knowledge and reproduction of the sociality of these technologies was continually being acted out within public servants’ professional capacities. The growth and development of social media practices was supported by the conditions of collaboration and networks that social media use afforded them. While not necessarily tied to their “official” duties, these practices were contributing to organized sense making within these communities (e.g. #w2p) and beginning to generate rules and norms that would manifest more broadly in the workplace as the nexus of individuals’ roles as practitioners, professionals and private citizens are interconnected.

5.2.2 Research Question Two

What were the perceptions of government public servants and agencies towards the types of information and records generated with social media?

The second research question focuses on the perceived value of information and records generated by social media use, situating the discussion within the ongoing discourse in the archives and record keeping scholarship.

There was not consensus amongst the interviewees regarding the “business value” of social media generated in a government context. The opinions of the interviewees ranged from all content being ephemeral due to its format (i.e. social media generated) to social media content potentially containing agency and government records of value, which should

583 Rooksby and Sommerville 2012, “Social Network Sites.”
be retained and made available in the long term. This reflects early-stage thinking about social media as emerging, disruptive technology, at a time when views on its role and importance were still divergent.

The ability for the medium to drive the messaging is surfaced in the contrast between Canada and the US with regard to social media government data and its long-term value. While politicians and agencies in Canada regularly tweet and post messaging on a variety of social media platforms, there were no Canadian government social media datasets publicly available from LAC for study. In contrast, in the US there is a commitment to work towards collecting and preserving government social media datasets, recognizing this archival material has long-term public value. For example, the 44th presidential administration’s social media data are publicly available for research and study. There may be a variety of reasons for the discrepancy between these two examples. At the time the majority of interviews took place (2013), the organizational culture, specifically between librarians and archivists, at LAC was experiencing points of friction, as discussed in chapter four. The influence of these frictions may have affected the ability to generate further engagement around this issue between public servants and the records and information professionals at LAC. Web harvesting at LAC was primarily focused on publications, which fall under the library mandate, with government web generated content consisting primarily of static websites. This potentially slowed the development of social media harvesting

584 Interview data did reveal that at the time of interviews (2013), LAC was experimenting with collecting social media data centred around what they perceived as topics of public interest, e.g. Lac-Mégantic rail disaster.
expertise at a time during the evolution of social media technologies when experimentation was taking place elsewhere.586 The Obama administration was the first in the US to take advantage of social media and platforms such as Twitter for both the campaigns and his time in office, with the POTUS and FLOTUS accounts actively engaging during the administration. Additionally, President Obama was the first president in decades to appoint a professional to the post of national archivist (traditionally a political appointment) and to push for legislation and action on the preservation of government records.587

As discussed in chapter two, some research participants stated they were finding ways to “self-archive” some of their social media outputs as they saw value in this information for their work, to share with colleagues and for the reference of future public servants. They were “self-archiving” because the existing records and information management infrastructure did not support capturing and sharing these conversations effectively. This highlights the shifting information practices of public servants in relation to the products generated in social media. Public servants interviewed saw the value of this information, particularly for those who would come after them and articulated a perceived need to preserve these dialogues for sharing, reference, and ongoing policy and practice development. The evolving social media practices enacted by public servants were effectively much further ahead of the capacity of the existing information and records socio-technical frameworks (e.g. policies and tools) to keep pace. This finding aligns with Mergel’s research into a three-stage adoption model for government social media use: initial

586 See discussion in chapter four of the government social media harvesting pilot undertaken by The National Archives in the UK.
587 Nelson and Silva 2019, “Archivist of the US.”
experimentation, followed by normalization, and finally, formalized strategies and policies. 588 The findings of this study add further nuance to Mergel’s work in its focus on the practice of public servants “self-archiving” social media content in efforts to retain content in the absence of effective tools and more formalized guidance.

As discussed in chapter four, there were clear frictions between the social media practices of individual (and groups of) public servants and the bureaucracy of the hierarchical information ecosystem in the GC. While there appeared to be rapid growth in the uptake of social media tools, the GC information and recordkeeping systems were, according to one interviewee, “just not there yet.” 589 Here they meant that while practices regarding the use of internal and external social media tools were adapting, public servants were aware of the shortcomings of the existing information and records systems to effectively capture and preserve what was generated with these emerging socio-technical systems.

Findings suggest that the use of social media by public servants and within agencies was diverse and not easy to identify for those outside the GC, as the majority of public servants interviewed engaged in professional use of social media on their private accounts. Failure to construct effective workflows and meaningful relationships between existing technologies and new social media platforms placed government information and records at risk, as discussed in chapter four. As the information on GCPedia and internal social media platforms is subject to access to information requests as well as protection of privacy legislation, this lag in records management capacity behind the pace of emerging

588 Mergel and Bretschneider 2013, “Adoption Process.”
589 Interview with I018.
technologies in the GC could have potentially detrimental consequences for the ability of the public to hold the government accountable through its stored records.

According to the Information Commissioner of Canada, “access to information rights depend on public agencies documenting their key activities and decisions.” 590 Previous and current Information Commissioners have emphasized the need to establish a legal obligation “requiring all public entities to document matters related to their deliberations, actions and decisions.” 591 As discussed in chapter two, at the time this research was undertaken, the Information Commissioner of Canada recommended to the TBS “that Parliament amend the Access to Information Act to add a comprehensive legal duty to document decisions made by federal government institutions.” 592 Further, the Information Commissioner, recommended that TBS develop a government wide policy that only enables instant messaging on government-issued wireless devices when there is a “bona fide operational need” and those who have such capacity enabled should “undertake mandatory information management training” specifically focused on the risks associated with instant messaging and information management. The implementation of technical safeguards was also recommended, to ensure that instant messages, “whether or not of business value,” are preserved on government servers for a “reasonable period of time.” 593

590 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2016, “Duty to Document.”
592 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, Access to Information at Risk, under “Recommendation to Parliament.”
593 Canada, Information Commissioner of Canada 2013, under “Recommendations to the Treasury Board Secretariat.”
It can be argued that while adoption of contemporary ICTs, primarily web infrastructure and social media platforms, has facilitated a more user-friendly and efficient service delivery model in government, this adoption has not necessarily facilitated deeper access to government information and records. In fact, this study provides further evidence of social media use significantly complicating information and records management flows due to implementation issues, such as for-profit, proprietary platforms, lack of transparency in systems design and metadata collection, and a fractured and complex adoption framework across government. As research findings demonstrate, the Canadian government’s information management infrastructure did not keep pace with the adoption of emerging ICTs. A rhetoric of democratizing information and open access are potential red herrings when examining the larger picture of government information access. While these platforms may make it easier for the government to push out publicly available information, they are potentially disadvantageous to enable more complex collection, access and usability of government records over time and space. While these two functions are not necessarily antithetical, if the GC is going to use social media platforms in the generation of government information and records (which its policy instruments stated is likely) as well as for pushing out communication, I would argue it has a responsibility to gain a better understanding of how these platforms operate and investigate requirements to facilitate access, collection, and long-term preservation of information and records identified as having the relevant value.

5.2.3 Research Question Three

What were the relationships between government policies and social media practices?
This question examines how government policies and their development frameworks informed (and were informed by) social media practices of the time.

Findings demonstrate that the policy development structures in the GC were still shaped by a command-and-control information framework despite a rhetoric of opening up the policy process to more collaborative practices. Policy development around social media platforms was slow to make its way through the bureaucratic channels of the federal government and findings indicate that efforts towards collaborative policy making within web 2.0 platforms were bogged down in bureaucracy once it reached a certain level within the system. The centralized mechanism of the TBS in the policy process contributes to this bureaucracy. Participants noted that once the process and product moved from internal web 2.0 collaborative tools into the more formalized policy mechanisms, the content, pace, and product changed. This is in line with Roy’s observations that social media and related technologies expose the limitations of the GC’s mindset of information containment and control, as well as Klang and Nolin’s policy research, which finds an underlying strategy of command-and-control amongst the majority of government social media policies examined.594 This highlights both the disruptive impact to practices that social media may have as well as the requirement for existing practices and systems to adopt more agile and responsive processes in light of rapidly evolving digital platforms.

Challenges to the policy development process were also surfaced in analysis of the documents and policy instruments. The initial web 2.0 policy instrument issued by the GC in

2011, “Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0,” notes a number of potential challenges that engaging with web 2.0 technologies pose (e.g. privacy, information management, risk, etc.). The policy is predicated on a web 1.0 view of information generated online, essentially adapting social media to older regulation and existing instruments. Social media platforms are still primarily perceived by the GC as a communication tool and the policy instruments are yet to take into account the “regulative power inscribed in the technological artifact itself.” As Klang and Nolin argue, it cannot be viewed separately. Because of the affordances of the technologies and the practices developed (and developing) as a result, as surfaced in the findings, the traditional hierarchies of regulation as well as rights and obligations “are pitted against each other in new and original ways.”

The shared collaborative social and work practices developing amongst public servants engaging social media technologies operated within—and sometimes replaced—the more hierarchical information practices of traditional government workflows. As practices depend on the activities that make them up as well as the conditions in which they unfold, these assemblages of interconnected actions were situated in an evolving information environment, with many participants enlisting social media in support of both collective and individual agency in navigating the tensions and affordances they perceived between platforms and the GC information and policy environment.

595 This is in line with Klang and Nolin’s 2011 research into Swedish government social media policies in “Disciplining Social Media.”
Due to the growing use of social media by government agencies and employees, information policy considerations of information and records management and preservation should occupy a central position in the formulation of information policies related to social media. Many of the policy instruments examined were prescriptive, which is problematic when dealing with media that is inherently horizontal, collaborative, and ever shifting. Additionally, existing policy models do not include mechanisms for feedback to be incorporated into the policy making process, hence lacking the agility that is required in contemporary ICT environments.\(^{598}\)

Social media platforms are not neutral, and therefore the policy instruments that guide their use and content in relation to government use and public information will need to effectively engage with this reality. Operative policy instruments that guide engagement of social media technologies by government agencies and individuals and the products generated within these platforms requires evidence-based policy development. The findings provide evidence for use of external social media platforms by public servants and agencies, and the generation of information and records of potential business and long-term value. However, policy instruments (from legislation downward) had yet to catch up to effectively deal with this advancement in government information practices.

Policy instruments examined fail to effectively address the fact that social media platforms are for-profit, commercial entities; as such, a plethora of challenges surface, as discussed in the literature in chapter two.\(^{599}\) As private commercial entities, social media

\(^{598}\) Mergel, Gong, and Bertot 2018, “Agile Government.”
\(^{599}\) See, for example: Baym 2015, “Social Media”; Vaidhyanathan 2018, Anti-Social Media; Gillespie 2018, Custodians of the Internet; Noble 2018, Algorithms of Oppression;
platforms lack transparency and accountability in areas that are of particular relevance to this research and government information and records, including, but not limited to: algorithms, metadata, and information use (and sale). These issues are ones that policy is meant to address in addition to providing guidance on in relation to government information—for example: privacy, surveillance, access, security, and social memory.

Citizens increasingly rely on commercial digital media platforms to address a variety of information needs, including engaging with government, which is also encouraged via government agency social media accounts. The myth of neutrality and unbiased platforms has been examined by critical information and internet scholars such as Noble, Vaidhyanathan, and Baym, as discussed in chapter two. The majority of users still trust the contents of social media platforms and are unaware of their biases (e.g. racial and gendered bias), coded in value structures and mediated content. These must be considered and engaged in development of policy instruments that guide government use of social media platforms. Democratic governments are not for-profit models and are tasked with the rights and well-being of all citizens; they need to be far warier of abandoning these responsibilities in the stampede to use for-profit digital systems.


600 See, for example: Baym 2015.
601 See, for example: Noble 2018, Algorithms of Oppression; Vaidhyanathan, Anti-Social Media; Baym 2015.
602 See, for example: Noble 2018; Gillespie 2018, Custodians of the Internet.
5.3 Implications for Theory

This study offers insight on the concept of the record in contemporary digital environments, which is an area of active debate. This case study highlights how the more traditional notion of records can be contested due to the introduction of new technologies and associated practices. What is and is not considered of long-term importance may be viewed differently in the wake of increased use of social media platforms in daily work practices and records creation. The complexity of what is generated, how and if it is collected and preserved, and the capacity of existing legislations and policies to support this work has been highlighted in this study. The research results point to a need to avoid a reductionist approach to records and their management and preservation, and to further explore the contemporary complexities that emerging digital technologies potentially surface in relation to traditional records and information management frameworks. How does this emerging combination of practices and ICTs affect the generation, management, and preservation of government information that must remain discoverable and accessible within the existing government structures, specifically access to information and protection of privacy? As some contemporary records of government move from static content to “activity streams,” the traditional tenets of archival theory—such as those relating to the qualities of authentic and trustworthy records—are ripe for examination.603

Moving forward, this work would benefit from engaging with scholarship that questions existing concepts of records and that posits ways forward that better articulate

603 Acker and Kriesberg 2017, “Tweets May Be Archived.”
contemporary digital environments and challenge traditional theories. Contemporary information and archival scholars are articulating alternative ways to reframe the ontological dialogue of records and expand the discourse beyond a bounded discussion. As digital and archives scholar Amelia Acker states, “in the digital age the ontological purity and drive for the true nature of the record is over.” Archival scholar Geoffrey Yeo has waded into the debate, characterizing his proposal of a record and questioning the utility of definitions altogether. Yeo argues for a representational view of records, as it is multidisciplinary and covers a wide spectrum. He argues for the legitimacy of viewing records in multiple ways, encouraging multiplicity of representation. Others have debated particular record attributes in digital contexts and advocated for change. For example, research by McLeod and Lomas found the attribute of fixity problematic in a digital world that requires “flexibility and information repurposing” and advocate for “liquidity.” The Record DNA project took a grounded theory approach to developing a vision of a digital record. This study’s findings add to this discourse and further the call to engage evidence-based work that contributes to informing theory into the future.


Yeo 2007, “Concepts of Record (1).”

McLeod and Lomas 2013, “Liquid Record.”

Record DNA n.d., “Record DNA.”
5.4 Implications for Policy

As critical information scholar Safiya Umoja Noble argues, public policy matters. For governments, which are the trusted custodians of much of an individual’s most private information (e.g. health, legal, financial, etc.), engagement with commercial social media platforms is not without consequence. Issues of increased surveillance, biased algorithms, privacy challenges, access issues, and lack of transparency are but some of the obstacles these technologies present. Challenges that are arguably compounded in the realm of public information.

The results of this study contribute to this dialogue particularly with regard to the policy implications of government adoption and use of for-profit online platforms for information generation and sharing. Evidence-based policy making on the part of the government may be difficult when operating in an environment where much of the operations and information (e.g. metadata, algorithms, terms of service) are unavailable and/or in continuous and unpredictable flux. As the findings suggest, agile policy development in the GC had yet to occur, which will pose a challenge to supporting the effective use of these platforms as they evolve and change.

Due to the rapid advancement of emerging ICTs and the grassroots uptake of and adaptation to these technologies, there is an ongoing need to adapt the policy process and policy instruments to be far more malleable and proactive than currently allows. A question at the core of this process is, “how do we promote design change that optimizes for citizen control, transparency, and privacy online?”—exactly the values that the early Internet

promised to embody.” In the absence of specific policy instruments, “practice is governed by the restrictions and affordances of the technology together with social conventions and unwritten rules.” What is at stake is too important to leave to de facto policy of the commercial platforms and their architecture designed to monetize personal data. A greater understanding of social media practices in government can assist in advancing evidence-based policy-making and effective policy instruments.

Social media platforms and the practices users engage in evolve, often more rapidly than legislation can respond to the resulting shifts; this necessitates a more agile approach that builds awareness of compliance amongst users but that also facilitates the consideration of new practices and products in the evolution of legislation and standards; “initiatives need to go beyond written rules and guidelines to embrace other ways to integrate values and ethics considerations into IT policies and decisions” Potentially models like those of agile software development could be adapted to the policy environment to enhance agility in an ever evolving information and communication technology landscape.

5.5 Implications for Practice

The range of viewpoints regarding the value of social media content could be addressed more stringently via policy instruments. Other national, provincial/state, and local governments are

---

614 For researchers who have begun to surface this idea, see, for example: Zuboff 2019, “Rein in Facebook and Google”; Mergel, Gong, and Bertot 2018, “Agile Government.”; Kornbluh and Goodman 2019, “Truth to the Internet.”
continually developing policies that clearly state information of value and/or records are likely being generated in social media and therefore must be managed accordingly. By making clear statements via policy instruments, which the research shows carry substantial weight amongst public servants, the discourse could leap forward and get on with the business of how to manage and preserve this content. Most major jurisdictions (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, UK, US) have long since moved beyond the debate about the potential value of social media content and have moved to experiment with frameworks and guidance on how to deal with this information from an information/records management point of view. The GC could take lessons from these jurisdictions in the form of policy transfer: not reinventing the wheel but learning from more developed environments. For many jurisdictions, it is not “if” social media potentially has value, it is “which” content has value, “how” do we identify it, and “what” guidance can we provide to ensure its management and potential long-term preservation.

Canada has a strong tradition of information and privacy commissioners who advocate for citizens’ rights, and who do not back down from large social media companies. Engaging the spirit of such actions, now is the time for public entities to involve citizens, experts, and advocates to enact legislation and other policy instruments that curb the unregulated actions of commercial social media platforms in efforts to seek accountability and transparency. As Gillespie notes, “platforms may not shape public discourse by themselves, but they do shape the shape of public discourse. And they know

615 Sweney 2016, “UK Information Commissioner.”
Exploring a policy transfer approach and modeling data protection policy instruments after legislation such as the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation could be an effective start. The GC should invest in technological developments that can enable concepts such as the Privacy by Design principles and engage in platform development that mediates the release of raw public data sets that can be easily de-anonymized.

To ensure that those who will be tasked with the identification, preservation, and maintenance of information and records created in evolving online environments are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary, education of information and records professionals needs to include instruction regarding information generated in online platforms, as well as teaching on such topics as information policy, ethics, and digital infrastructures.

---

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the contributions of this study, discusses some limitations, and proposes directions for future research. The work concludes by returning to the challenges of aligning the immediacy of government actors’ social media use with ideals of long-term government accountability articulated in the introductory chapter of this dissertation.

6.2 Contributions of the Research

Between beginning this research study and defending this dissertation, the social media landscape in government has shifted dramatically. It is now commonplace for politicians, diplomats, and governments to announce policy, post election calls or results, issue public statements, announce cabinet shuffles, engage in political gamesmanship, etc., on platforms such as Twitter. The election of US President Donald Trump on November 8, 2016 radically changed the arena of social media, particularly the social media platform Twitter. Already making news during the campaign, the 45th US President’s Twitter activity is regularly reported in the news media, with its often contradictory, of-the-moment, void-of-facts content informing topics trending online. It has caught the attention of lawmakers and archivists who note the value of the presidential tweets to the long-term historical record.619

This research focused on the early adoption and practices of social media by public servants and government agencies in the GC at a critical time in its early adoption and use and contributes to a better understanding of the challenges and issues of emergent technology adoption and related policy development practices.

6.2.1 Methods

The opportunity I had during data collection to co-interview eight participants elicited unexpected revelations because of the interactions between the interviewees. A number of insights into the organizational dynamics (e.g., hierarchy) between groups was revealed during conversations between these interviewees. Exploring co-interviewing as an intentional technique to gain insight into organizational culture and operating dynamics is a contribution of this study that was unforeseen.

6.2.2 Information/Archival Studies

An information/archives studies perspective offers an opportunity to interrogate the content and context of government records generated in social media platforms and the role of the developing practices on the long-term viability of these records. Paired with an examination of the GC’s use of social media, this research study offers an opportunity to ask questions about the ability to facilitate long-term social remembering and the memory that national and public archives and memory institutions arguably have a duty to preserve. This work diverges from the majority of research into social media adoption and use, which is predominately undertaken by media and communications scholars. As an information and archival scholar, whose experience is grounded in research and practice on the role of
records with regard to long-term accountability and access, I bring a novel perspective to the study of social media research.

A better understanding of social media practices by government agencies and public servants as discussed in the findings works to shed light on the need to surface discussions that are at the intersections of record characteristics, record definitions, information policy, and theory. If the GC and agencies such as LAC take a broad approach to records, which this research study reported, then there is a confrontation that surfaces between policy and application, with regard to archival practice and theory. The study’s findings suggest that policy and practice need to be taken into account in defining and managing records that are generated in social media platforms, perhaps informing a re-examination or broadening of characteristics in the process and a broader examination of the GC and LAC’s approach to archives and records management. Looking beyond the life cycle model to other models such as the continuum model for possible approaches to managing social media records and those characteristics of oral histories and practices might elicit insights into how to better address the challenges these records surface.

6.2.3 Practice Lens

My use of a practice lens in this work highlights its utility as an instrument to study the assemblages of human and non-human actors, interdependencies, materiality and knowledge construction holistically as opposed to focusing on any single factor or technological platform (e.g. Twitter). The ability to engage the technological, social, and organizational factors simultaneously aids in painting a fuller picture of the role practices play in the adoption of new technologies such as social media and the resulting implications for
information and records as instruments of accountability. In this work, I utilized practice 
theory as a generative means to analyze and discuss the role of practices in relation to 
information and records, expanding its utility into the discourse of information and archival 

6.2.4 Time of Change

Offering reflection on the use of social media by government during a particular period, my 
work provides a detailed picture of a critical turning point in the GC’s adoption and use of 
social media. My ability to engage participants and observe the GC social media 
environment at this pivotal point in its evolution provides unique insights into developing 
practices and policy in the engagement of emerging digital technologies.

6.2.5 For-Profit Platforms and Government Responsibilities: Growing Tensions

The study surfaced a number of tensions present in government early adoption of social 
media. My work contributes to a deeper inquiry into the problematic nature of for-profit 
technology platforms, which lack transparency and accountability, as key instruments/agents 
in the production, storage, and dissemination of government information and records. A 
practical contribution of the study is the identification of dissension that arose between the 
formal adoption of social media in government without the adoption of what participants 
viewed as the spirit and affordances of these technologies. The study’s findings call into 
question the ability of future generations to hold the GC accountable through stored records, 
particularly because of the government’s adoption and use of proprietary platforms and the
organizational frictions that developed when these technologies were adopted into rigid bureaucratic systems.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This work is subject to a number of limitations. One limitation of the study relates to the environment from which the majority of participants were drawn: the GC itself. As employees in public service, interviewees had to be anonymized to ensure minimal impact on their job and career security, as the community of social media users in the GC at the time of interview data collection was not large and was strongly networked. This significantly curtailed my ability to articulate the specifics of individuals’ experiences and their practices. As many of the participants were early adopters and/or participants who had knowledge of information management issues regarding social media, they were particularly well-informed and knowledgeable about the research questions.

A further limitation linked to the first one listed relates to my inability to align actual social media posts (both internal and external to GC) with participants’ interviews. This was also in support of protecting participants’ identities and the ethical complexities of collecting individual social media account data. As such, this study is a partial picture, focusing on key players in the GC, which will tend to overemphasize the centrality of the phenomena under study. Future research could look at a different population further out in time to see how social media are conceptualized and used moving forward.

620 See, for example: Zimmer 2010, “Harvest Public Twitter Accounts.”
Finally, due to my own life circumstances, the research project went through a multi-year hiatus period, such that the final analysis and writing occurred several years after the data collection. As a result, the novelty of the findings may be less than what they would have been if published closer to the date of collection. On the other hand, the gap in time enabled me to take a more historical and reflective perspective on the data than would have been possible otherwise. Further, the dramatic developments with respect to the role of social media in social and political life over the past several years has enabled me to view the case, retrospectively, in a different light. While the questions asked in this research reflect the situation at the time of data collection, including a level of enthusiasm and positivity regarding social media that would be unlikely today, there is no question of its continued relevance, as many of the issues identified in this study persist.

6.4 Future Research

As evidenced in the study, issues regarding government use of social media are not merely technical, but include issues grounded in institutional culture, evolving practices, policy instruments and frameworks, as well as the evolving practices of public servants engaging commercial social media platforms and the challenges such engagement surfaces. As the interview data was collected during a relatively early stage of GC social media use and related policy development activities, it would be interesting to revisit social media use amongst GC public servants and agencies to further examine its use in records generation and investigate the state of policy development. Many, but not all, of the study’s participants were GC’s early adopters of social media technologies. Additionally, LAC was just beginning to investigate the archival implications of social media-generated content and was
in the very early stages of web preservation and social media collection sampling.
Investigating the progression of social media collection and preservation (if applicable) at LAC and the practices employed in this work could be helpful to provide guidance for agency and individual social media practices as well as the policy instruments that inform them.

The organization culture of the GC public service is paradoxically one of grassroots innovation and early adoption of technology, including the championing of innovative uses of social media amongst a given community and a command-and-control atmosphere of information as power more broadly. However, depending on the department or agency and under the broader federal administration within which this research took place, a chill effect was certainly noted regarding the ability of any one participant to speak freely and/or critically. As an underlying premise of organizational culture featured in the study’s findings, an avenue of future research in this environment might focus on a more in-depth examination of the organizational culture amongst public servants in relation to technology adoption and use.

Another avenue of future research aligns with a growing desire in public and political spheres to raise the bar on conversations related to social media. To date, the internet and social media platforms are de facto ungoverned spaces that have given rise to previously unforeseen and still little-understood uses and affordances, from political disruption, socio-economic influence, and data privacy and ethics questions that are seemingly without end.

Are such platforms ungovernable, or is there a need to explore alternative ways to bring international responsibilities and obligations to bear on these platforms? Possible treaty/governance models such as those suggested by Agnès Callamard, the United Nations
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, are worthy of examination and study: she argues that the technology revolution we are undergoing is creating huge challenges to our democratic societies.621

6.5 Final Thoughts

The motivation for the research conducted in support of this dissertation lay in the proposition that stored government records can act as instruments of accountability and may be called upon to stand as proxy vehicles for actions (or inaction) taken, decisions made, and/or policies enacted (or not enacted). I was motivated in part by examples such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that took place in Canada and that called upon archives and records as evidence in support of the work it conducted during its tenure. During my final writing and revisions of this dissertation, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued its final report, Reclaiming Power and Place.622 The Inquiry drew upon public records and during its tenure amassed a collection of “thousands of public records of evidence, including testimony from survivors, families, experts, academics, and Knowledge Keepers, as well as written submissions, statements, orders, and motions” that are now housed on its website.623 The Inquiry has called upon LAC to preserve and make its records available to all Canadians:

We call upon the federal government—specifically, Library and Archives Canada and the Privy Council Office—to maintain and to make easily accessible the National Inquiry’s public record and website.  

As the world’s information becomes increasingly digital and interactive in its manifestations, it is of paramount importance that those agencies tasked with ensuring the long-term preservation and accessibility to the public record are advancing their knowledge and capacity to do so, and that policy instruments exist to ensure this is possible.

Shortly after the inquiry’s final report was issued, the Association of Canadian Archivists issued a statement that commits to collaboratively work with Indigenous heritage organizations to lobby the GC for resources and that calls upon archivists to engage in this work:

Recognizing the power of archival records, and the responsibility of archivists to ensure no-barrier access for victims to records about themselves as created by state, military, intelligence, and police services, the ACA calls upon all archivists to identify and work to dismantle existing colonial-based archival structures and processes in order to both heed these Calls to Justice and to incorporate the Calls to Action identified in the Summary of the Final Report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

When inquiries such as Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls take place, social media platforms are often the tools that many Canadians utilize in giving voice to their opinions, sharing their experiences, and/or critiquing the process. The ongoing uptake and use of emergent ICTs, such as social media, is taking place inside and outside of government for engagement, access, and information generation; knowledge of the use and record-generating

624 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2019, Executive Summary, 64.
practices of those utilizing these technologies, as well as the policies that regulate them, could aid in ensuring records generated with social media would be accessible into the future. What surfaced is that social media practices and products pose profound obstacles to traditional recordkeeping and information policy models, potentially requiring a radical rethinking of some fixed theoretical record concepts and practices.

I posit that conceivably, social media pose a “wicked problem” in relation to records, archives and information policy.626 By positioning this challenge as a wicked problem, the temptation to find fixed solutions may be replaced with imagining ways forward that draw upon ongoing innovation, engagement, and collaboration in service to an evolving suite of elucidating propositions, endeavors, and investigations that call out and problematize key aspects of social media. Particularly those considerations that currently make transparent access and preservation only an imagined possibility. These include proprietary profit-driven platform models, an increasingly monetized internet and datasphere, closed and inaccessible algorithms, and tensions between traditional information paradigms and new models of openness and transparency.

626 Nathan and Shaffer 2012, “Preserving Social Media.”
Bibliography


———. “Secrecy Versus Openness: Democratic Adaptation in a Web 2.0 Era.” In *Web 2.0 Technologies and Democratic Governance: Political, Policy, and Management*


Ye, Yunshan, Ding Ye, Cathy Zeljak, Daniel Kerchner, Yan He, and Justin Littman. “Web-Archiving Chinese Social Media: Final Project Report.” *Journal of East Asian


Appendices

Appendix A: Structure and Description of TBS Policy Instruments


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Usual Audience</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Framework</td>
<td>Formal statement that provides context and broad guidance with respect to policy themes or clusters. Explains why Treasury Board sets policy in a particular area.</td>
<td>Ministers, Deputy Heads</td>
<td>Architectural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Formal direction that imposes specific responsibilities on department. Policies explain what deputy heads and their officials are expected to achieve</td>
<td>Ministers, Deputy Heads</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Formal instruction that obliges departments to take (or avoid) specific action. Directives explain how deputy heads’ officials must meet the policy objective</td>
<td>Managers and Functional Specialists</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>A set of operational or technical measures, procedures or practices for government-wide use. Standards provide more detailed information on how managers and functional specialists are expected to conduct certain aspects of their duties.</td>
<td>Managers and Functional Specialists</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline</td>
<td>A document providing guidance, advice or explanation to managers or functional area specialists.</td>
<td>Managers and Functional Specialists</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Examples include recognized best practices, handbooks, communications products and audit products</td>
<td>Managers and Functional Specialists</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Structure and Description of TBS Policy Instruments
Appendix B: Government of Canada Policy Instruments Examined

In addition to the legislation and policy instruments listed in the tables below, a variety of internal departmental instruments were examined (e.g. wiki guidelines, Twitter policies, web/internet handbooks, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web 2.0 Policy Instrument</th>
<th>Date Issued</th>
<th>Date Rescinded (if applicable)</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Instrument Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines to Acceptable Use of Internet Wikis and Blogs Within the Government of Canada</td>
<td>27 Nov 2008</td>
<td>30 June 2015</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines for External Use of Web 2.0</td>
<td>18 Nov 2011</td>
<td>9 June 2014</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Acceptable Network and Device Use (*Replaces Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0)</td>
<td>1 Oct 2013</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline on Acceptable Network and Device Use (*Related to: Policy on Acceptable Network and Device Use)</td>
<td>9 June 2014 (modified)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard on Social Media Account Management</td>
<td>1 April 2013</td>
<td>11 May 2016</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline on Official Use of Social Media (*Related to: Standard on Social Media Account Management)</td>
<td>11 May 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Guideline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Government of Canada Web 2.0 Policy Instruments Examined

Legislation Examined

Access to Information Act
Financial Administration Act
Library and Archives Canada Act
Privacy Act
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Policy Instrument</th>
<th>Date Issued</th>
<th>Date Modified (if applicable)</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Instrument Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector</td>
<td>2 April 2012</td>
<td>15 Dec 2011</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Resides TBS framework in the hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Information Management</td>
<td>1 July 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard on Metadata</td>
<td>24 June 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Management of Information Technology</td>
<td>1 July 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Framework for Information and Technology</td>
<td>1 July 2007</td>
<td>9 July 2009</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard on Web Accessibility</td>
<td>1 Aug 2011</td>
<td>31 March 2013</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard on Web Interoperability</td>
<td>1 July 2012</td>
<td>31 March 2013</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Official Languages</td>
<td>15 Oct 2012</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Accountability Framework</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 June 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive on Identity Management</td>
<td>1 July 2009</td>
<td>1 July 2019</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Privacy Protection</td>
<td>1 April 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Access to Information</td>
<td>1 April 2008</td>
<td>22 Sept 2014</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Government Security</td>
<td>1 July 2009</td>
<td>1 July 2019</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Additional Government of Canada Policy Instruments Examined
Appendix C: Selection of Documents Examined

Following is a selection of the documents examined in the document analysis phase of this study.


A Real Life Example.” Paper presented at the World Social Science Forum
https://nusum.wordpress.com/2018/08/26/the-crowded-boardroom-when-the-long-
tail-collides-with-hierarchy-a-true-story/

McCaskill, Claire, and Tom Carper. Letter from Senators McCaskill and Carper to Archivist
letter%20to-aotus%283%29.pdf.

Ontario. Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. Privacy by Design: The 7
16, 2019. https://www.ipc.on.ca/wp-
content/uploads/resources/7foundationalprinciples.pdf.

Society of American Archivists. Letter from Society to Mark Zuckerberg and Members of
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Social Media Users/Experts

Each interview will begin with a reiteration of the research goals, purpose of the interview, date, time, location, and name of the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher will revisit the participation/ethics statement and ensure the interviewee understands any risks and that the interview will be recorded and transcribed.

Protocol for Interviewing Social Media Users/Experts

A Introductory Questions

1) Can you summarize your current scope of duties?

2) How long have you been using social media in your role?

B Interview Questions

Scope and Purpose

1) What social media tool(s) are you currently using to carry out your job responsibilities?
   a. Are you currently using Twitter in this capacity?

2) In what ways are you using SM [e.g. Twitter] to carry out your job responsibilities?
   a. What task(s) are you using this tool(s) for?
   b. How often are you using social media [e.g. Twitter] in this capacity?
   c. What functions/processes of your professional role does this use support?
   [Notes for interviewer—Potential functions: communication within and outside of the organization; collaboration/information sharing inter/intra-organizational; social networking inter/intra-organizational; outreach/engagement; etc.]

• Is this tool replacing a previous tool/technology that served the same function?
• Are you using social media as part of a new business process or replacing an existing process?
• Has the adoption of this tool(s) changed your workflow process?
   o If so, how?
• What type of content are you creating with these tools?
• How are you using the content created by these tools?
• Does the social media functionality add value to the content?
   o If so, how?
• Are modifications made to content created by social media tools?
  o Are previous versions of the content saved?
    o If so, why? Where? How?
• What information is captured or contained within this tool(s)?
• Is there an on-going organizational need for the content?
• Is the content created by and/or contained in this tool(s) used for organizational decision-making?
• Is the tool(s) used to work internally within the organization, externally with outside individuals and/or organizations, or both?
• Is the tool(s) hosted within your organization or externally?
• How does your department evaluate the use of social tool(s)?
• Do you know if your organization has a social media policy and/or use guidelines?
  o If so, are you familiar with it?
• Does your organization have a records management policy?
  o If so, are you familiar with it?
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Records Managers/Archivists

Each interview will begin with a reiteration of the research goals, purpose of the interview, date, time, location, and name of the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher will revisit the participation/ethics statement and ensure the interviewee understands any risks and that the interview will be recorded and transcribed.

Protocol for Interviewing Records Managers/Archivists

A Introductory Questions

3) Can you summarize your current scope of duties?

4) How long have you been using social media in your role?

B Interview Questions

Scope and Purpose

Interview Questions for Records Managers/Archivists

- What social media tool(s) is your organization currently using?
- Are departments required to have the social media tools approved by IT?
- Are departments required to inform IT of the social media tools they employ within their departments?
- Are departments/individuals within the organization required to vet new social media tools with IT?
  - If so, is there a criterion by which use of social media tools is permitted?
- Do new social tools undergo a beta/test phase? If yes, please elaborate.
- What criteria determine if the introduction and use of a social media tool is successful?
- How are these tools being used?
  - What task(s) are these tools being used for within the organization?
- What are the functions/processes these social media tools support?
  [Potential functions: communication within and outside of the organization; collaboration/information sharing; inter/intra-organizational; social networking; inter/intra-organizational; outreach/engagement; etc.]
• What would be the effects if the tool were to no longer be used by the organization? (e.g. would it need to be replaced by a tool with a similar function)
• Are these tools used internally within the organization, externally with outside individuals and/or organizations, or both?
• How does your organization select and manage the social media tools/technologies you use?
  o Are departments required to have the social media tools approved by records management?
  o Are departments required to inform records management of the social media tools they employ within their departments?
  o Do new social tools undergo a beta/test phase? If yes, please elaborate.
  o What criteria determine if the introduction and use of a social media tool is successful?
• How has your organization’s use of social media tools evolved over time?
• How does your organization evaluate the use of social media tool(s)?
• Is there an on-going organizational need for the content produced with social media tools?
• Is the content created by and/or contained in this tool(s) used for organizational decision-making?
• Is the content contained in and created using these tools treated as records of the organization? (e.g. does it fall under the retention schedule, is it classified, etc.)
• Is the content created by and/or contained in these tools considered the official records?
• Are records created with social media tools currently captured and managed by the organization? Archives? If so, how is this being done?
• Does the organization have a social media policy and/or use guidelines?
  o If yes, does the policy integrate records management requirements?
• Does your organization have a records management policy?
  o If yes, does it address social media?
• How are permissions granted to individuals who “view” these tools determined?
• How are permissions granted to individuals who “edit” these tools determined?
• Please identify the social media tools that are hosted internally by your organization.
• How often does the organization update/upgrade its social media tool(s)?
### Appendix F: Final Codes, Categories, and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Global Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriation Frictions in a Bureaucratic Ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrenched culture</td>
<td>Social media adoption challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champions</td>
<td>Social media adoption motivators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal platforms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal use</td>
<td>Internal social media use</td>
<td>Practice Crossing Tensions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Crossing Platforms:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External platforms</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Internal and external social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>External social media use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending</td>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Practice Crossing Tensions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Crossing Roles:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work life relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Official, personal and professional use of social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of work</td>
<td>Hybrid use</td>
<td>media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding silos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of content</td>
<td>Views of social media outputs</td>
<td>Status Quo Disruptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal versus formal</td>
<td>Social media practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline/online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Global Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc practices</td>
<td>Information/Record Management (IM/RM)</td>
<td>Organizational Capacities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>IM/RM Capacities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM/RM policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge gaps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephemeral</td>
<td>Value of social media</td>
<td>Contested Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty to document</td>
<td>Status of social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of records</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissions</td>
<td>Bureaucratic process</td>
<td>Role of Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tensions in the Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Partial Policy Instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy making</td>
<td>Policy context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frameworks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media and policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value in government</td>
<td>Organizational culture</td>
<td>Institutionized Tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information as power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital literacy</td>
<td>Recordkeeping challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Final Codes, Categories, and Themes