C2O and Frontyard: hacking the archives to design community spaces in Surabaya and Sydney

Luke Bacon
Department of Design, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Kathleen Azali
C2O Library, Surabaya, Indonesia

Alexandra Lara Crosby
Department of Design, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, and

Benjamin Forster
University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to identify shared themes and concerns of two local and critical archives by comparing their design and day-to-day practice.

Design/methodology/approach – The action research has drawn on the experience of collaboration between a Sydney-based community space (Frontyard) and the Surabaya-based co-working community (C2O) over one year. Each space houses a small physical library of books, which is the focus of this analysis.

Findings – Hacking has emerged as a key value of both archives. A hacking approach has shaped the design of each space and the organisation each archive. Hacking frames the analysis of each collection in this study.

Practical implications – Pragmatic and political understanding of such archives have implications for better quality and more authentic exchange between the communities that make use of these libraries in Indonesia and Australia.

Originality/value – While some work on local critical archives has been done in Indonesia and Australia, no research to date has made specific comparisons with the aim of sharing knowledge. Because these archives are often temporary and ephemeral, documenting the work that goes into them, and their practitioners' perspectives, is urgent, making possible shared knowledge that can inform the ways communities make decisions about their own heritage.

Keywords Australia, Hacking, Repair, Indonesia, Libraries, Design, Critical archiving, Practice-based research, Small libraries

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This paper explores two local critical archives that are the result of community initiatives challenging the dominant modes of practice in the mainstream and formal archive sector. These archives live at two sister spaces: Frontyard (www.frontyardprojects.org/), a Not-Only-Artist Run Initiative and flexible space for practical skills-sharing on Cadigal-Wangal land in Sydney's Inner West suburb of Marrickville (Australia); and C2O (https://c2o-library.net/), a library and a community space that is also used for co-working and skills-sharing in Surabaya's city centre of Tegalsari (Indonesia).

These archives exist within complex ecologies distinct from official archives and government-run libraries. Public libraries in Australia, for example, are mostly owned and run by local government, and often have a neutral, apolitical aesthetic, designed in a "top-down" way (Manzini, 2014), with the aim to be inoffensive and risk-averse. Likewise in Indonesia, public libraries are designed to be formal spaces, where impolite clothes such as sandals and shorts are forbidden, thus excluding some of the most economically marginalised of Indonesian society. In both these contexts, citizen initiatives, community work and social innovation are vital to archive ecologies, which often "develop without the presence of the state, often even in opposition to the perspectives of the state or other formal institutions" (Murti and Fajar, 2014, p. 7).

Historically, formal archives in Indonesia were linked to national identity, but the Cold War in Asia brought more repressive politicisation of information (Anderson, 2013), heavy-handed censorship and control of public institutions. In Indonesia this situation fuelled both the widespread distrust of government-run libraries and archives, and at the same time, "the growth of (quasi-)public collections initiated by individuals and funded privately or collectively (through families, friends, membership systems or a mix of grants)" (Azali, 2017, p. 194). C2O exists within this ecology of alternative, non-government libraries in Indonesia.

In Australia, Frontyard exists within an ecology of activist organisations, artist-run spaces and public institutions providing an "antidote" (as Isabelle Stengers puts it) to official narratives of Australian arts. The organisation is imbued with DIY (do-it-yourself) philosophy similar to independent spaces in Indonesia (Luvaas, 2013). However, the content of the library is inherited from a government collection, creating a tension between the history and the future of this archive, which will be explored further in the paper.

The paper is structured in three parts: firstly, in the introductory section, we outline our methodology and provide background to the two archives under discussion; secondly, we introduce hacking as a key approach and value of both these archives, and a lens to frame their design, drawing out its necessity as a way to understand critical local archives as political projects; and thirdly, we point to concerns common to these two archives and ways to share knowledge and practices. Because literature on critical archiving is vast, it is not possible to cover it in depth in this paper[1], and we do not have room to contextualise C2O and Frontyard within a global survey. We acknowledge however that they are two libraries amongst the myriad of "sister spaces". "Often these are spaces of experimentation, where new models of library service and public engagement can be test-piloted, or where core values can be reassessed and reinvigorated" (Mattern, 2012). In the interest of manageable scope, we have focused on the relationship between literature on hacking and the national contexts that shape C2O and Frontyard.

Methodology

We position this project as practice-based research, where the practice takes two forms: the design of the two archives and a knowledge exchange project between Frontyard and C2O, the spaces that house the archives. The authors of this paper include organisers, designers

and users of the spaces under discussion. Our collaborative practices, with other people as well as the more-than-human actors (the cats, the plants, the mould, the worms) in each space, shape the archives and the relationship between them (Haraway, 2015).

At both Frontyard and C2O, we define our practice as collaborative critical archiving. As Mills (2013) explains, archives are always fragmentary because they are one version of the past. In our organisations, agenda are reflected in the choice of what is archived, and in the ways we approach writing about those archives. As researchers who also have personal agenda that sometimes do and, at other times, do not represent those of our organisations, when we write the archive together, in our own distinct ways and in collaboration, the archive is reconfigured.

This research began as a broad ethnographic enquiry into the design of community libraries in Java. A research team from Frontyard visited nine libraries across three cities in Java, observing, exploring the collections, interviewing librarians and keeping a research blog at https://indoaustdesignfutures.org/notes/. Because the research was concerned with the design of the spaces visited, the libraries were approached as assemblages of objects and practices as well as collections of texts. As Mills continues, archives are not just textual sources but also made of material objects which carry an affective value, bear witness to past events and cultural practices and become tangible connections with past webs of social and cultural relations (2013, pp. 701-713).

One of the libraries Frontyard connected with through this process was C2O. The relationship then developed as a slow conversation between the authors of this paper. In fact, two of the authors had already worked together on a publications about the event "Design it Yourself Surabaya" which later became "Surabaya Design Summit" (Azali and Budiman, 2016; Crosby, 2017). As we continued to share information and stories about our spaces, these conversations generated the possibility of collaborative projects. Art historian Kester (2011) describes such participatory projects as "dialogical practices", practices "organized around conversational exchange and interaction" (2011, p. 8). Rather than aiming to achieve archival objectives, such as shared data or digital preservation, our goal was more broadly to facilitate a long-term conversation (a part of which is the collaborative generation of this paper). One of the reasons for this gradual and long-term approach is the lack of resources for travel and concentrated project efforts at either space. Slow conversations are the only option in these conditions in contrast to larger institutions which have risk management plans and extrinsic timeline pressures. But the choice to work slowly is also an antidote to institutional relationships. As Deborah Bird Rose explains: "Antidotes require slow work, not only in the sense of taking time, slowing down, and doing things carefully, but also in the sense of living in the present temporalities, localities, and relationalities of our actual lives" (Rose 2013, p. 9). The research team returned to Surabaya to present at the Surabaya Design Summit in 2018 and the ball kept rolling from there.

Through this process, we also used visual mapping to identify common concerns (Figure 1). Most importantly, this diagram helped us identify hacking as a common approach to designing each of the archives and a possible framework for collaborating in the future. This live and collective mapping practice can help draw attention to the presence of many more-than-human objects and actors (Crosby *et al.*, 2014).

The C2O ecology

C2O library & collabtive was founded by Kathleen Azali in 2008. Its mission is to create "a shared, nurturing space, building tools and resources for humans (and non-humans) to learn, work, and interact with diverse communities and surrounding environment". https://c2o-library.net. C2O's story is inextricably linked to Indonesian national history and the
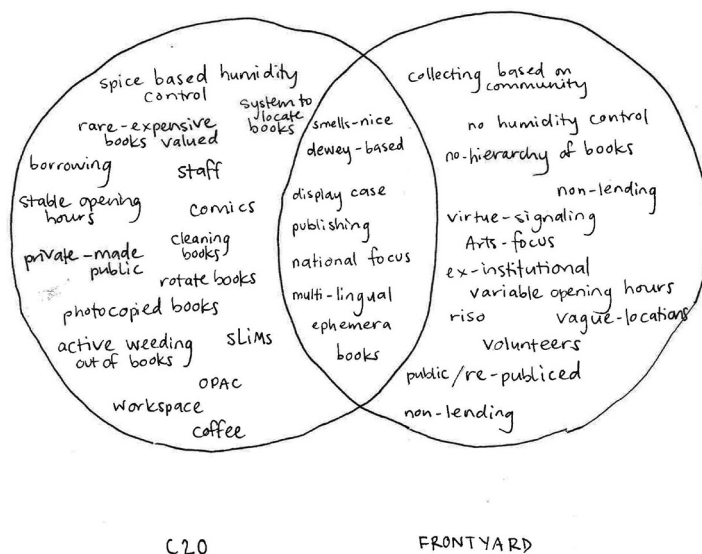
Notes: The map identifies some of the actors that appear and actions
that occur at each site, and was produced over a series of days through
casual observation and conversation between practitioners. This iteration
manifested as an accompaniment to the immersed activities of walking,
eating and drinking (the strong coffee at C2O), talking, and planning
together

relationship between formal archives and DIY design in Indonesia (Azali and Budiman, 2016).

In Indonesia, libraries and archives are very unevenly spread:

> The country's tropical, humid climate and the geopolitical conditions of thousands of islands at
> different stage of infrastructural development make preservation a demanding task. The diverse
> cultures and hundreds of languages of more than 300 ethnic groups bring further complications
> and challenges to the tasks of archiving and building interoperability and classification standards
> (Azali, 2017, p. 191).

While the national capital of Jakarta boasts the newly opened National Library, claimed to
be the biggest in Southeast Asia, district-level libraries[2] are a rarity – or, if they exist, are
without clear opening hours. Most government-run libraries are also open following civil
servants' working hours (08.00-17.00 on weekdays, and closed on weekends or partially
opened on Saturday), making libraries barely accessible to most working people.

Under heavy control during the more than thirty year-long authoritarian regime of the
New Order (1966-1998), where media and information was heavily controlled (Sen, 2003;
Lim, 2012), libraries were plagued with a poor public image, distrust and low self-esteem as
a "dumping ground" to punish corruptors (Håklev, 2008):

> An outcome of this distrust has been the growth of (quasi-)public collections initiated by
> individuals and funded privately or collectively (through families, friends, membership systems
> or a mix of grants). Notable examples include the HB Jassin Literature Documentation Centre, the

Indonesian Cinematheque, Bung Hatta (the first vice president) Library [. . .]. Typically these collections have their own filing and classification systems, subjectively—even if meticulously—developed by their founders, most of whom did not have any formal training in LIS (Azali, 2017, p. 194).

There are a number of examples of these non-government, "alternative" libraries in Indonesia[3], their growth surging after 1998 with the collapse of the New Order (Håklev, 2008). C2O exists within this ecology of non-government, alternative libraries, starting out with the idea of books as sharing/shared resources. This is because acquiring even classic or award-winning titles in Indonesia require considerable socioeconomic resources and time because:

> [. . .] major bookshops keep most newly published titles for no more than three months. Some of the best collections of books are privately owned, and many of these books cannot be found in public or university libraries (Heryanto, 2015, p. 173).

Additionally, the Cold War brought repressive politicisation of information. For example, materials related to LGBTQ and leftist issues (e.g. the Indonesian Communist Party, Marxism-Leninism, 1965 killings, labour unions, activism, etc.) are deemed "politically sensitive" and more difficult to access, and the past five years have witnessed increasing crackdowns and book raids by the military and police force[4].

In Surabaya, Kathleen found a hodgepodge of academics, journalists, activists, student and youth groups that passionately open up their (quasi-public) collections, sometimes as street libraries, but they rarely last long as their circles of users grow outside of their personal networks, and they find troubles in the building of library systems (e.g. no catalogue and no recording of loans). Most of the work is voluntary, and the libraries usually peter out as the founder or organiser moves to another place, finds employment or marries.

One such collection was brought together by an anthropology student group from a nearby state university, whose members often visited C2O. Over several years they amassed about 500 books, usually loaned and circulated to their friends. As the founders faced increasing economic and familial-societal pressures, they contacted C2O asking whether it could take care of the collection. Around the same time, C2O also put up a website (and back then, some pamphlets) that included various events (film screenings, book discussions, etc.) and an advertisement that said something similar to:

> [. . .] rather than letting your books rot under leaks or, get eaten by termites, better to give them to C2O so they can be used by more people. Books that we cannot keep will be given to other libraries/TBMs, or sold for fundraising.

The space itself was initially leased by Kathleen's brother as a library and co-working space for designers, but when he could no longer run it, Kathleen took over and added more books to the collection rather than just focusing on design. She went to friends, families and acquaintances, almost all happy to give away their book collections.

A member of the library, Yung Adi submitted an essay about C2O for a "literacy community" competition by the publishing group and bookshop Gramedia, which brought grants and thousands of book donations (though many of the more common copies have been sold for fundraising). Plenty of C2O members have also donate their books (and other things such as furniture and electronics), so that the cataloguing could barely keep up with the inflow. The model of library membership and loans at C2O are partly derived from book/comic rentals[5] that were ubiquitous in Indonesia in 1970s-1990s: there is an annual membership of IDR 50,000 (±AU$5), and for each book loaned, there is a charge of IDR 6,000 (AU$0.60).

Other than access to books, however, there was also increasing demand for a safe and affordable public space for people to organise discussions, workshops and film screenings. Government-run public spaces in Surabaya rarely have websites with transparent procedures, and when artists or activists wanted to rent the space to host their events, they may find to prohibiting costs, unclear processes or *pungutan liar* (petty extortion)[6]. Thus C2O, initially lending its space through personal and collective networks, published their application form and conditions online. There is a graduated rate for rental of the space so that artists, activists, students and individuals or not-for-profit organisations without funders can apply for concession, but big, commercial organisations are charged accordingly.

The Frontyard ecology

There are many Frontyard stories – the nature of the space is such that none should be given any precedent above any other (Rosenman, 2017). Each is a view into a site that has become tangible only thanks to the intersecting blur of multiple investments: anarchist dreamings, permaculturalist possibilities, futured futuring, queerings, alternative art imaginings and activist research. Articulating one view may threaten to overwrite others – so, a disclaimer before anymore words: this is but a refracted angle of a space in the process of becoming. Turn the viewing glass to see another Frontyard, perhaps one with rambling pumpkin vines and other non-human actors at the centre. This section outlines two Frontyard stories: one describing how Frontyard organised around its current site in 2016, and the other, how Frontyard came to house a library.

The first origin story can be read through the aftermath of the 2015 Australian Government federal budget, when the Abbott Government announced an unprecedented change to arts funding (Dow, 2016), shifting AU$104.7m from the Australia Council for the Arts to create a new funding program based on ministerial discretion, the National Programme for Excellence in the Arts, later renamed Catalyst (Caust, 2015). The decision prompted a sector of small-to-medium arts organisations and many individual artists to protest. This protest was configured in multiple ways, and one was in the formation of an informal group to cultivate speculative thinking on the future of policy and the arts. For those involved, the meetings over this period made apparent the necessity of physical space for sustained discussion, which could offer the possibility of building on, and working through, the residue of asynchronous collaborative accumulation. A building in Marrickville, Sydney, was offered on a "peppercorn rent" by the local government, then Marrickville Council (since controversially amalgamated into the Inner West Council). Frontyard is what formed in this space from January 2016, offering residencies[7], workshop space and a library. The breadth of Frontyard has since expanded from the Arts into alternative accounting, critical research and multidisciplinary experiments in sustainability.

Frontyard aims to avoid extracting from the people it is created for, so there is no financial cost to participate or use the space at Frontyard. People either take over a residency room or the library for one or two weeks, or attend the semi-regular dinners or some other small event. People often leave a message in the form of ephemera from their projects attached to the walls, or make some contribution by hosting an event, working in the garden, cataloguing some ephemera for the library or leaving a few jars of pickles. The space is full of the fading or firm traces of its inhabitants.

Another origin story, one concerning how Frontyard came to have a library, might also begin in response to action at the Australia Council for the Arts. Under the restrictive logic of economic rationalism, the Australia Council rationalised away their own research library collection, decommissioning it in late 2014, on the basis of low usage and the high cost of real

estate[8]. By happenstance, Benjamin Forster (later Frontyard co-founder) was completing studies in Information and Library Science at this time, and after becoming aware of the decommissioning, acquired the remains of the collection through the pretext of an installation project for the 2015 exhibition, *Technologism,* at the Monash University Museum of Art. In the words of the artist, "this was madness, as I had no means to store the collection long term". The exhibition was used to raise awareness of the collection and to buy time before it ended up in landfill. The aim was not necessarily to revive this discarded library, but to bring its value into question and hold space for the possibility of people and things developing new associations with it – if it was valued. Did Australian artists know about this collection which supposedly represented their collective history? When they did, did it have any value to them? What was missing from this archive? When Frontyard formed in 2016, it made sense that this space, also born out of arts cuts, should become home for a library decommissioned through institutional belt-tightening.

The Frontyard Library is no longer really the Australia Council Research Collection. By the time Frontyard took custodianship, the carcass had already been picked over: some of the collection had been donated to smaller specialty libraries; the Australia Council staff held onto the books that were relevant to their individual work; volunteers who were packing and decommissioning were also given license to take books. Frontyard also had to discard some books because of the limited space. The self-help literature on how to be a successful artist and the commonly found journals were amongst the first to go. Unfortunately, in the Australia Council's decommissioning, the official library catalogue was also discarded[9]. Except through shared stories between those involved, there is now no clear way to know what was lost in transition from institutional collection to situated community library – this ghost has faded edges.

What is *hacking*? And why is it important to understanding local critical archives?

It has been well established that *hacking* is a contested concept (Coleman, 2013). One dominant definition of hacking is about unauthorised access to computer systems, also called "cracking". Another definition, also widely held is: free tinkering in systems to adapt, repair, redefine, and reproduce, quickly, without warranty, and not by committee – and to have fun doing it. This second definition and practice is Coleman's focus (2011, 2013), and is the broad definition we relate to. This concept of hacking is prominent in sub-cultures globally, commonly in DIY, Maker, activist and Free and Open Source Software groups, and it is through their association with these groups and movements that the concept comes to the authors. While Coleman (2011) identifies wide variations of beliefs and practices within hacker culture, she finds a unifying thread in that hackers are "devising in part from their particular technical skills and life experiences novel modes for collaborating, organizing, and protesting" (p. 515). In addition to the definition above, here we highlight some points of importance to the hacking that happens at C2O and Frontyard, as they go about collaborating, organising and protesting in the design of their libraries.

Hacking, in most contexts, implies independence of the people who control, dominate or designed the system, or object, being hacked. Putting a sticker over your laptop camera, taping-together broken glasses, or repairing your own washing machine without the official (expensive) parts is hacking. While this hacking is not always unwelcome, it is mostly unauthorised and tests existing capabilities, protocols and authorisations with new uses and contexts. At other times, hackers build an alternative system because they find the mainstream, dominant options unacceptable (the creation of the Debian computer operating system is an example of this approach (Coleman, 2013). Von Busch highlights the role that

hacking practice plays in a performance of independence from more dominant players: "When hackers build their own system, even if the basic act in itself is not confrontational, it draws new borders, displaces power, and recircuits established chains of command" (von Busch, 2017, p. 50). This is an example of how hacker politics are "fundamentally grounded in acting through building" (Coleman, 2011, p. 514), or, said another way, hackers "create the possibility of new things entering the world" (Wark, 2004). In this way, hacking practices fits into Beradi's political vision for collaborative, imaginative design action to unpick the "blackmail of realism that forgets the inscribed possibility and only sees the forms of power currently deployed" (2017, p. 108).

We relate the globally circulating metaphor of hacking to the concept of "*ngoprek*" used in Indonesia. Ngoprek not only:

> [...] consists of opening up the black box of technology, taking things apart, trying new components and new configurations, making things work in new ways, and then explaining, writing about, diagramming and taking pictures of what you have done so that others can replicate it, but also "implies that one will participate in a broader public of fellow bricoleurs" (Barker, 2015, pp. 204-205).

In other words, hacking is not just delving into and reconfiguring technical material systems but also social structures and connections – crucial to the hacking political projects described above. In the context of Indonesian digital art, Jurriëns has discussed it as follows:

> Hacking in this instance does not mean sabotaging information and communication networks, but rather creating open laboratories for exploring and executing alternative scenarios for more sustainable, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly futures. Some digital artists use new, techno-cultural hacking strategies to go beyond the market, and establish creative connections with various groups in society that are ignored or underrepresented by mainstream politics and business [....] hacking culture is not only the result of recent technological developments, but also part of a cultural evolution over an extended period of time, steered by innovative and socially engaged artists using a variety of creative strategies (Jurriëns, 2017, p. 208).

Alongside the creation of new things, there is a counter-urge in hacker culture to repair, cleverly maintain, scrounge, dumpster-dive and honour craft and heritage (Coleman, 2013, Chapter 3; Jackson, 2014). Here, hacking is reflected in the apparently mundane, though defiant, efforts to keep something running past its official used-by-date. This attitude is indeed the origin of the Frontyard and C2O libraries and the commissioning of both spaces for new purposes.

Hacker culture is also characterised by simultaneous, passionate value placed in: on the one hand, mutual aid and interdependence; and on the other, of self-reliance and independence. Coleman refers to an alternation "between communal populism", where "hackers speak of the importance of learning from others and construe knowledge production as a collective enterprise" and, on the other hand "a commitment to self-reliance", which can be expressed as "individual elitism" (2011, pp. 105-106). Within the spectrum of hacker culture, when the value of self-reliance becomes elitism it has been associated with practices of exclusion in accordance with a supposed hacker meritocracy, such as the "contempt culture" identified by Shaw (2015). The hacker culture supported at Frontyard and C2O aims to resist this elitism, and is focused on collective knowledge production and learning together, a position famously reflected in Swartz's "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto" (2008). At Frontyard, one potent example in this vein is the open and collaborative cataloguing of their library's ephemera collection and its meticulous public documentation (Bacon, 2017).

While hacking is a significant concept and practice at Frontyard and C2O, we would caution against their complete subsumption under the hacking concept, which risks obscuring the complexity of local knowledge and practices (Suchman, 2005, p. 2). We note the use of the concept by monopolistic, surveillance-capitalist corporations, such as Facebook Inc. (Lombardo, 2016), and reject any intrinsic value in innovation or disruption in themselves. Both spaces have supported projects to increase the visibility of the contributions of traditional knowledges, slow and ecological design (e.g. a permaculture garden at Frontyard and a regular second-hand market at C2O), and to highlight the costs of the contemporary obsession with change. While the aim of this paper is to introduce hacking in the small library and critical archiving context, we would highlight the great contextual differences in infrastructure between Sydney and Surabaya, and question the smooth translatability of a concept of practice, such as hacking, for people responding in these different sites; further observation and comparison is needed to elaborate on these differences.

With this understanding, then, hacking is an important lens for aiding in the analysis of local critical archives. Firstly, it brings into focus the multiplicity of creative, situated interventions that practitioners make in response to challenges in resources, environments and changing constituent needs, as well as the range of more-than-human actors they enlist in the process. Secondly, hacking draws out the significance of connections between institutions and groups around these sites, and the opportunities for beneficial collaboration and exchange.

Identifying common concerns

In this section, we expand on some of the concerns that arise in sharing, comparing and contrasting Frontyard and C20. We consider these concerns through the lens of hacking, in two main focus areas: the consideration of the sensory in the design of the library spaces and activities that surround them; and the systems of managing and providing access to the archives which prioritise openness and collectivity.

Sensory concerns: designing more-than-human spaces for books
C2O and Frontyard are labours of love, produced iteratively within robust political discussions. As library hackers, we operate unsanctioned, serve specific groups, and don political aesthetics that sit with our view of independent libraries as political projects generated by and for an interested and active citizenry. Coleman identifies that hacker politics are "grounded in acting by building" (2011, p. 514); at C2O and Frontyard, libraries have been built with small and slow solutions, a concern for how archives "feel", the inclusion of plants and animals as well as books in the space, and an awareness of climate and seasons atypical of public libraries in Australia and Indonesia. Climate and environment play a central role in archival life in Asia-Pacific region, especially in the tropics (Teygeler *et al.*, 2001) as high tropical temperatures and sunlight, along with constant high humidity accelerate degradation and shape the ways human interact with books.

Coleman (2011), discussing online hacker culture, foregrounds the pleasure hackers get from "inhabiting technology":

> Geeks and hackers build and configure technology at work and for fun, com-municate and collaborate copiously with one another using these technologies, and, most significant, derive and express deep pleasure and forms of value by inhabiting technology (p. 512).

At Frontyard and C2O, technologies are sources of pleasure, and exist in assemblages which include the physical spaces themselves, their encroaching climates and natural environments, the library collections, as well as their organisational and access systems. People join these assemblages by inhabiting the spaces and participating in collaboratively configuring them, "expressing dissent technologically" (Coleman, 2011, p. 514). Along with dissent, there is also optimism, and joy for alternative possibilities grown collectively, including between small libraries.

Neither Frontyard nor C2O resembles the hard-edged, industrially cleaned, fluorescently lit, no-food-or-drinks-allowed, large-roomed, surveilled and managed spaces which are typical of major public libraries in Australia or Indonesia. Visitors arrive at C2O through a fringe of leafy vines flopping from the front of the building, past boxes of free books and shelves of zines and stationery for sale. Cats share the space, jumping on tables and curling between the feet of readers as they browse. The side passage, formally a driveway, is brimming with plants that drip and shine when rain comes in from the building's edge; students, artists, designers and random visitors read or tap on laptops, some smoking at small tables. Coffee, tea or chocolate is available from a communal kitchen run by the C2O team on rotating shifts, served in reusable glass bottles, an example of C2O's efforts to phase out plastic packaging and minimise waste (this practice is still very unusual in Indonesia, where plastic bottles proliferate and recycling stations are rare).

At the end of the side-passage is a multi-function space, hosting various events: an internationally attended design summit; an organic market; a film screening; a book discussion; activist-journalists organising protest; an exhibition of activist street art highlighting the violent displacement of *kampung* (villages) to industrial development. The space and its interiors have developed gradually in use, rather than through an implemented design. The chairs are repaired and repainted discards from neighbouring cafes. The shelves a motley of old, heavy teak furniture, colourful store-bought ones, and those made from used plywood – many were gifted by neighbours, members and visitors. The front garden is small but filled with various plants such as frangipani, bluebellvine, spinach, rosemary and basil. Passion fruits hang at the balcony, some ripe for picking.

Some 5,000 km away, visitors arrive at Frontyard off Illawarra road, a narrow residential street overused as a shortcut between the arterial Marrickville and Sydenham roads. Through the gate, visitors walk up the concrete path past likely unmowed grass under a big shady tree that hangs over the building's gutters. At the front is also a shelf of free books, duplicates and discards from the full shelves of the library. The library is down the hall, past the long blackboard (time-trumpet) that a visiting child has used as a huge canvas. Past the rainbow flag, a souvenir from a sound-art summit in south-Taiwan is a small room with an adjoining kitchenette. It has floor-to-ceiling shelves, full of books and a large, Risograph Duplicator. In the centre of the library room is a large and low vetrine on wheels, carefully made from plywood left over from a home kitchen renovation, housing a collection of ephemera in boxes below and a perspex protected display on top; inside, recent Frontyard residents have curated a selection of texts. Outside the panelled windows are garden beds built as a contribution by the first Frontyard resident Gilbert Grace from wood collected from Milkwood Permaculture's farm, via another community space, 107 Projects Redfern. These beds, the first design intervention made by Frontyard in the space, are a way for humans at Frontyard to "think with plants" (Hamilton, 2018). The health of the garden acts as the primary indicator of the present strength of the bond between participants and the space.

In tackling the high humidity and insects of East Java's tropical climate, C2O inserts spices (cloves and peppercorns), dry rice and coffee remains between the books as part of a

cyclical airing regime to ward off mould. This solution is alternative to prohibitively expensive air conditioning, and contributes a comforting smell in the space. The Frontyard Library is also multisensory: it has the smell of old books. Although the roof at Frontyard has been known to leak, humidity and rain are yet to be seen as a problem in Sydney's milder, subtropical climate. Some of the book covers are bleached by the direct sunlight that hits the library. No action has been taken to protect the books yet, so the bleaching burns the architectural history, a history of previous residences, into the surface of the books. This quality attracted Frontyard resident, artist and part-time librarian Chris Carmody to work with the collection, creating an arrangement of books with bleached covers for the library vetrine as an extension of his pre-existing painting practice. These different interventions in response to the way that more-than-human actors such as humidity and light impact paper artefacts suggest further questions about how people in the spaces relate to the collections, and the role of small libraries in different contexts.

Within the main book space at C2O, there is a desk against the window to the side passage. It is long enough for four people to sit at, and is often occupied. The desk – remains of a 2015 exhibition on graphic arts during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia curated by Antariksa from KUNCI (Yogyakarta) – has a heavy glass top, creating space for books, photographs and documents underneath. There are phone chargers at the table, often in use. When the Frontyard researchers visited Surabaya in 2018, they noted the C2O Library was used as a workspace which meant visitors interacted with the collection, and saw this lacking in their library. In direct response, later in the year, a new work desk was built into the window of Frontyard library, made from one of the doors that were removed to open up the building when Frontyard moved in. This is one way that the interaction between the libraries has resulted in shared hacking practices producing reconfigurations that afford new interactions with the collections.

Systems of management and access
At most contemporary libraries and archives, a significant task is the creation and management of library record management systems, and the stemming decisions have deep impacts on collection access, as well as philosophical and political implications (Jones, 2018).

Both Frontyard and C2O have loosely retained the Dewey decimal classification (DDC). In the case of Frontyard, it was the system established previously by the Australia Council. The main library shelves are organised at the Dewey "100" level classification, but the books are each shelf are not sorted more precisely. There are also shelves that do not follow this system: a section for new material, feminist materials, a strip of exhibition catalogues, plus the central table/vetrine which contains boxes of 900 ephemera, or "spineless" items. At C2O, the history and geography section is arranged on shelves counter-clockwise (jokingly said to replicate the pilgrimage in Mecca) with the most space taken up by the urban history of Surabaya, followed by sections for the country of Indonesia, (Southeast) Asia, then other regions of the world. Nevertheless, many materials – such as texts on sexual politics and women's movement in Indonesia (Wieringa, 2010), theory of nationalism based on Southeast Asia – defy single category placement.

As has been discussed by many practitioners and theorists, "library knowledge organization systems of all kinds fail to accurately and respectfully organize library materials about social groups and identities that lack social and political power" (Drabinski, 2013, p. 97). At Frontyard, materials are not at all individually accessible and hence not easily locatable. Rather the library is intended to be browsed; encouraging random collisions with books that might be unexpectedly timely to the reader. Hacking a system advances it because you love it, not because you hate it (Busch, 2008). While Dewey may not be loved by

all, hacking the Dewey system provides a starting point for creating alternative and critical ways of approaching both these archives.

At Frontyard the focus has been on the process of open collective cataloguing rather than generating a finished catalogue (Bacon, 2017). The initial cataloguing of books was also a collective task that generated hours of conversation while barcodes were scanned and references were retrieved from Trove (National Library of Australia's online portal to Australian resources).

At C2O, cataloguing initially used a simple spreadsheet, before a decision was made to adopt the Senayan Library Management Systems (SLiMS), which is open source, multi-lingual, and used by thousands of libraries in Indonesia and overseas. While some classifications and subject headings different from those by the Library of Congress have been created, they are nevertheless still subject to endless debates. More recently, inspired by Drabinski (2013) and Read-in (2017), C2O plans to "highlight and make visible the fundamental paradoxes of classification and cataloguing from a queer perspective" through simple practices such as putting up signs or stickers in between shelves questioning why the books are here.

The Frontyard library, unlike C2O, has no full-time librarian looking after the books or actively developing the collection. It relies on the users of the library to care for the library. With no set opening hours, Frontyard uses a Google Calendar, which "librarians"[10] (anyone who has been inducted into the space and who would like to help open the library, work with the collection, or generally be involved in sustaining and developing the library) can add events to. The Frontyard website (www.Frontyardprojects.org) then updates automatically to show opening hours from this calendar. This means that anyone at any time can open the library without the need for formal volunteers, managers or the static regularity of an ordinary library.

In initially cataloguing the collection, Frontyard used the National Library of Australia's Trove system to catalogue and check the availability of the books in other collections. There are a few legitimately rare books within the collection, and many of the books (and even pieces of ephemera) are held in several other libraries in Australia. This raises questions around why the archive is unique, and why people are working at looking after books which people could find elsewhere. The answer lies in the fact that Frontyard is a messy, lived in space with a critical archiving practice. The collection becomes an institutional ghost which is inhabited by life, and constantly re-encountered by life (people stand and chat in the space, have coffee, generally loiter while people wash up). In a way the history of the Australian arts haunts the space, but then again, the question of relevancy also becomes irrelevant, when the historical archive is seen as compost from which many new seedling have sprouted.

These seeds include, for example, a collaboration with Sydney Review of Books supported a local writer, Michelle Kelly, to work closely with the collection, producing new writing in relation to the old. More recently Frontyard connected with Enjoy Public Gallery who also have a library. Through the pretext of the exhibition Purpose Built[11], established an interlibrary exchange where we each took custodianship of a small part of each other's library[12]. A selection of the old Australia Council collection now lives in the care of Enjoy! in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Other examples include curator Sebastian Henry Jones who spent time with the collection in preparation for an exhibition, the collaborative collage production of Ira Ferris and Tom Malek, artist Chris Carmody who worked in relation to the material of the collection, and performer Malcolm Whittaker who used the library as an ongoing location for his project Ignoramus Anonymous[13].

Similar to Frontyard, C2O is a messy, lived-in space. However, in Indonesia, books are still relatively difficult to find, whereas Australia has plenty of public libraries. Choices about classification at C2O as well as the ways access is granted to new publics are deeply political. Classification can allow access or prohibit it. Rather than rail against the totalising systems of DDC or Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), like Sanford Berman did throughout his career (e.g. Sanford Berman website www.sanfordberman.org/, C2O and Frontyard librarians hack – taking what is useful to use while tweaking or flat out discarding what is not relevant).

Finding slow and small solutions together

There is great potential for practice-based research done together by small library communities to not only share knowledge, but to design sustainable systems that address their shared concerns. Rather than unnecessarily exhausting limited resources by each individually solving shared technical problems, it becomes clear that by defining and understanding each other's concerns, the common can become articulable and considered with equal weight to local specifics. Technical solutions for common tasks such as cataloguing books, sharing information within collectives or processes for ethical decision-making, can all be open-sourced and hacked on together in a way that draws on each other's learnings. By way of illustration, Frontyard plans to migrate from their own customly hacked together OPAC over SLiMS. C2O already use SLiMS and by adopting the same system, we can both share technical knowledge, but also active contribute to the development of already successful open source software. In this way the slow and small solutions accumulate and begin to have reach outside of the two organisations themselves.

This paper has introduced two local critical archives: C2O in Surabaya and Frontyard in Sydney, connected through a slow, conversational exchange that is generating new possibilities for collaborative critical archiving. For the authors, themselves organisers and designers of the spaces, hacking has emerged as a key approach and value of both archives. Hacking provides a frame for analysing the two sites, drawing attention to the complex, relational qualities of the sites, their inhabitants and their interventions in building libraries as projects with political visions. The pragmatic and political understandings generated through this practice-based research have implications for better quality and more authentic exchange between the communities that make use of these local libraries in Indonesia and Australia. Further research can elaborate details of the differences between experiences and knowledges at the sites, creating further possibilities for beneficial collaboration.

Further questions that have emerged from this research include: What is particular to Indonesia and Australia about the exchange? What potential relationships might be developed between small, independent libraries and large public institutions? How might the mutual aid ethos of hacking help ensure such relationships are beneficial to local communities? How do the practices observed in these sites relate to histories of small-scale cultural activist exchange? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of engaging in shared projects between global dispersed, local libraries, such as these, including the development of shared technological infrastructure? Hacking our libraries together is generating new archives and new questions for action research.

Notes

1. For interested readers, *The Archive as a Productive Space of Conflict* is a good entry point into the diversity approaches to and conceptions of archiving outside of traditional Library Information Science contexts (Miessen *et al.*, 2016). Frontyard and C2O can both be positioned within this extended context that Miessen, Chateigné, Fürchtjohann, and Artières attempt to chart.

2. There is, however, what is called *Taman Bacaan* (Reading Garden), usually understood as informal libraries that is incorporated within a village or a house. Historically, *Taman Bacaan* grew out of private book rentals, but during the 1990s the government incorporated its name into its program, *Taman Bacaan Masyarakat* (TBM, or People's Reading Garden). Most of the TBMs are focused on child education, the collections filled with school, religious textbooks and children's books. They are mostly "designed as a short-term project, and never designed to be a long-term sustainable program," with collections "mainly books about Pancasila, government doctrine and political propaganda of the New Order" (Håklev, 2008, p. 23).

3. Some examples include KUNCI, Kineruku, Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA), and Medayu Agung, plenty of which were also visited by the research team from UTS and Frontyard, and documented in https://indoaustdesignfutures.org/notes/

4. The dissemination of Communism, Marxism and Leninism has been declared illegal in Indonesia in 1966 after the 1965-1966 anti-leftist purge (Robinson, 2018).

5. Book/comic rentals were ubiquitous in Indonesia since books were expensive (reportedly costing as high as a pair of jeans, or five to ten meals) and the internet was no yet available. There were also up to 50 per cent taxes on imported foreign books. In the 1990s, these rentals often also rent VCDs, DVDs, PlayStation and other games. After 2000s, many of these rentals died out.

6. This can vary according to whom you know, since there are no clear procedures on website, or even in printed publications. For example, when a cinema club wanted to run their film festival in Balai Pemuda Surabaya in 2017, they were asked to pay IDR 8,000,000 per day.

7. See *Category: Residencies* for details of Frontyard's residency programme https://wiki. Frontyardprojects.org/everything/Category:Residencies

8. For their financial accounts, the Australia Council had the library valued at $87,000 as part of their "rationalization" process in 2014. Their 2014/2015 annual report notes that the library was "decommissioned in 2015 and has been written off" (Australia Council for the Arts, 2015). We have found no other mention of the decision or media release relating to the transfer of the library from the public service to a private individual.

9. A list of over 10,000 items related to the collection at the time of its decommissioning, some present, some missing, is available at www.Frontyardprojects.org/library/Decommission% 20Remaining%20Book%20Collection%20-%20Incomplete%20%282015-06-12%29.xlsx

10. "Librarians" is placed in double quotes because the majority of the Frontyard librarians have no formal training in information science. Anyone can be a librarian at Frontyard, the only prerequisite is a care and interest in the library. Likewise with C2O, none of the workers have any formal training in information science.

11. http://enjoy.org.nz/publishing/exhibition-essays/purpose-built/athenaeum-shrugged#article

12. Add link to the decentred collection contract.

13. www.facebook.com/events/260763157618950/

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Corresponding author
Alexandra Lara Crosby can be contacted at: alexandra.crosby@uts.edu.au