
Timothy Gollins\textsuperscript{1,2} Graham McDonald\textsuperscript{1}
Craig Macdonald\textsuperscript{1} Iadh Ounis\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} University of Glasgow UK, \textsuperscript{2} The National Archives UK
The release of Public Records facilitate accountability under the rule of law
- Includes *archival of records* and freedom of information

To be effective they must be reasonably *contemporaneous* and open
Public Records Transfer Process (UK)

Government Department

Selection & Appraisal → Sensitivity Review → Transfer → Permanent Preservation → Open Presentation

The National Archives
Public Records Transfer Process (UK)

Government Department

Selection & Appraisal

Sensitivity Review

Transfer

Permanent Preservation

The National Archives

Open Presentation
Selection & Appraisal

- Cannot keep everything
  - All records are important, but some more than others

- Archives Catalogue and Selection
  - Based on context of creation not subject

- Breakdown in Admin Practices when Digital records introduced
  - Digital Records have poor contexts

- Need tools to extract and confer meaningful structure
  - Based on the Context of Creation and Distribution, not just on the Content
Sensitivity Review

- Sensitive records remain closed – up to 120 years
- Possible (challenging) Sensitivities
  - *Defence and National Security* – e.g. Nuclear missile deployment
  - *Commercial Confidentiality* – e.g. Notes of contract negotiations
  - *Damage to International Relations* – e.g. Insulting remarks about a leader (past or even the current one!)
  - *Personal Privacy and Health & Safety* - e.g. Religious beliefs or names of informants
- Important to avoid precautionary closure
  - Even though this is lawful, it is Morally, Ethically, and Politically unacceptable
Sensitivity & Privacy

- Personal privacy only one aspect of sensitivity
- Sensitivity is rather like personal privacy, but of countries and organisations
- Common Properties (discovered by our own work)
  - Distributed and Diffused within/across documents
  - Concerned with context (including prior knowledge)
  - May not depend on subject matter of record
- Study of sensitivity necessary for general solutions to privacy
Ways Forward & Links to IR (1)

- Deep study of human reviewers
  - To understand sensitivity itself and how it is perceived
    - Perception of Sensitivity vs. Relevance – c.f. [Webber & Pickens SIGIR 2013]
    - Order of presentation for review – c.f. sensitivity is often concerned with narrative – c.f. [Scholer et al SIGIR 2013]
  - For feature identification

- Develop new features
  - For context – c.f. relevance propagation [Qin et al SIGIR 2005]
  - and diffuse properties
Ways Forward & Links to IR (2)

- Use correlation with external information
- Extension of test collection
  - Challenging given the nature of sensitivity
- Assistance not Automation
  - Reviewer must justify in law, therefore require assistance – c.f. [Azzopardi SIGIR 2011]
- Use active machine learning to adjust for local circumstances
**Conclusion**

- Transition to Digital Records enables better access in principle (c.f. online), but presents challenges that puts open government at risk.

- Sensitivity offers great opportunities and challenges for both IR research and many domains beyond (e.g. Social Science, Politics, etc.).

- Sensitivity and Privacy issues need much more than technical solutions.

- Study of sensitivity are necessary for general solutions to privacy (also for selection & appraisal).