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(IJMOE)**www.gaexcellence.com/ijmoe**FROM ROUTINE TO RENEWAL:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF
ACADEMIC VISITS IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**Noryana Ahmad Khusaini^{1*} Mohd Shamsul Daud²¹Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Campus Sungai Petani, Kedah, Malaysia noryana@uitm.edu.my <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4551-4238>²Faculty of Information Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA Campus Sungai Petani, Kedah, Malaysia shamsul559@uitm.edu.my <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4928-4907>

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Purpose: The reformation of two analytically distinct dimensions of an Information Management course students' observable engagement with archival learning and the lecturers' own pedagogical self-renewal is investigated through this collaborative analytic autoethnography based on a field-based academic visit to the National Archives of Malaysia.

Method: This study employed a collaborative analytic autoethnographic approach, in which the lecturer-researchers collectively reflected on and analysed their experiences of the field-based academic visit. Multiple sources of data were incorporated to complete the study, including the lecturer-researchers' personal journals, post-visit observational notes, memory-based reconstruction checked against contemporaneous records, and naturally occurring student responses documented during and immediately after the visit. The materials were revisited continually through coding for recurring patterns, comparison across sources, and interpretation according to Experiential Learning Theory, place-based pedagogy, and scholarship on emotion in learning. Rather than presenting student outcomes as measured learning gains, the study presents them as observed and expressed responses. **Findings:** There are three interrelated themes: Firstly, affective engagement reflected in students' sense of responsibility, sustained attention, questioning, participation, and post-visit discussion. Secondly, theory-to-practice integration, as students observed and attempted the process of tissue repair and book-sewing in an authentic archival setting. Thirdly, teacher self-renewal arose from witnessing familiar disciplinary content become newly meaningful to students. The analysis shows how concrete experience, reflection,

conceptual connection, and action overlapped during the visit, while the archive itself functioned as a pedagogically consequential place rather than a neutral venue. **Contribution:** The study extends field-visit research by foregrounding the reciprocal relationship between students' situated learning and educators' reflective renewal in archival and records management education, a context rarely examined through collaborative analytic autoethnography. It argues cautiously that well-designed academic visits may create conditions for both disciplinary meaning-making and renewed pedagogical purpose, without assuming that such outcomes are universal.

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Keyword:

Analytic Autoethnography, Place-Based Learning, Teacher Reflection, Affective Engagement, Experiential Learning



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Introduction

Teaching archival and records management requires students to understand concepts that are simultaneously theoretical, material, procedural, and professional. After more than 15 years in Information Management education, we had become increasingly aware of a pedagogical tension: concepts such as preservation, conservation, stewardship, and professional standards could be explained in the classroom, yet students had limited opportunities to encounter the practices and settings that give those concepts operational meaning. At the same time, the repetition of familiar content had made aspects of our teaching feel routine. This study begins from that tension rather than from the field visit as an event in itself.

A field-based component in the course created an opportunity to examine what changed when learning moved into an authentic archival environment.

The visit to the National Archives of Malaysia was planned as a course-related learning experience in which students could observe professional archival work, interact with archivists, and participate in preservation activities. Students also assumed organisational responsibilities through a student-led committee. These features made the visit analytically useful because they allowed us to observe not only what students encountered, but how their forms of participation differed from those typically visible in classroom teaching.

Two units of analysis are deliberately separated within this study. The first is the students' learning experience, particularly their attention, questioning, participation in practical tasks, comments made during the visit, and continued discussion afterwards, which are observable and expressed indicators examined for the study. The second is our pedagogical transformation as lecturer-researchers: how observing students in an authentic professional setting prompted systematic reflection on our teaching routines, role, and sense of purpose. The student evidence

is therefore not treated as proof of long-term learning or transformation; it is used to interpret situated engagement and theory-to-practice meaning-making during this particular visit.

Analytically, the paper asks how the interaction of experience, place, and affect helps explain these two processes. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is used to examine movement among concrete experience, reflection, conceptual connection, and action; place-based pedagogy is used to analyse how the archive itself shaped what could be noticed and understood; and scholarship on emotion helps interpret affective engagement without equating enjoyment with learning.

Accordingly, the purpose of this analytic autoethnography is to investigate how one field-based academic visit mediated (a) students' observable engagement and theory-to-practice learning in archival education and (b) the lecturers' reflective pedagogical renewal. It addresses two questions: (1) How did students observed and expressed responses during the visit indicate situated engagement and connections between archival theory and practice? (2) How did witnessing those responses reshape the lecturer-researchers' understanding of teaching practice? By analysing these questions separately and then relationally, the study contributes a reciprocal educator-student perspective to research on experiential learning in archival and records management education.

Literature Review

Academic field visits offer something that is difficult to reproduce in a classroom: the chance to see disciplinary knowledge at work. For students in applied fields, this matters because concepts that may seem distant in a lecture can become easier to grasp when they are encountered in the settings where professionals actually use them. Research on field-based learning has highlighted benefits that include first-hand experience, increased interest and motivation, opportunities for active participation, and stronger connections between course content and authentic contexts (Djonko-Moore & Joseph, 2016; Fagan & Sturm, 2015; Krakowka, 2012; Larsen et al., 2017; Thakur & Cai, 2018). In this sense, an academic visit not only offers a break from the classroom, but it also creates a space for students to observe, ask questions, participate, and try to make their own connections between theory and practice.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a useful way of understanding what happens in such settings. Kolb (1984) describes learning as a cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb and Kolb (2005) later emphasized learning environments that allow students to move among experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. A field visit can bring these processes together quite naturally. Students can encounter something beyond the classroom, reflect on what they have observed or conducted, and relate new experiences to ideas introduced in class. Further understanding can be developed and tested through questioning or practical application. This process is especially relevant to the present study, where students actively engage with the preservation techniques themselves rather than being passive and merely observing archival work.

Evidence from different disciplines also points to the educational value of learning through experience. Bauerle and Park (2012), for example, linked experiential learning with knowledge retention, while Wurdinger and Allison (2017) reported that faculty viewed experiential approaches as valuable in higher education. Research specifically on field trips adds another

layer to this discussion. Djonko-Moore and Joseph (2016) showed how field experiences can help students connect course content with authentic contexts, and Larsen et al. (2017) found that students valued field trips for motivation as well as personal and social development. These studies demonstrated a shift from viewing a field trip as simply an event to examining what students truly experience, accomplish, and comprehend while they were there, reflecting the same perspective as the present study.

Place also matters. Place-based education draws attention to the fact that learning is shaped by where it occurs and by the meanings attached to that setting (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002). From this perspective, moving a lesson outside the classroom is not automatically enough; the setting itself needs to contribute meaningfully to the learning experience. Studies of field-based education suggest that authentic environments can support observation and contextual understanding in ways that classroom explanation alone may not fully achieve (Djonko-Moore & Joseph, 2016; Krakowka, 2012). For the students in this study, the archive was more than simply a venue for the visit, but it was a significant part of the learning experience itself.

This distinction is particularly important in archival and Information Management education. Terms such as preservation, conservation, archival stewardship, and professional standards can be explained in a lecture, but their meaning may become more tangible when students encounter the materials, equipment, workspaces, and professional decisions associated with them. At the National Archives, students were able to place concepts they had encountered in class alongside actual preservation work and conversations with professional archivists. The professional setting gave those concepts a context that our lecture slides could not fully provide. There is also an emotional side to this kind of learning. Dirkx (2006) and Zembylas (2007) draw attention to the important role of emotion in teaching and learning, particularly in shaping how learners engage with and make meaning from their experiences. We find this especially relevant to field visits because a new environment can unsettle the routine of the classroom and invite students to respond differently to what they are learning. Larsen et al. (2017) similarly identified motivation, first-hand experience, and social interaction among the values students associated with field trips. Curiosity, enjoyment, and surprise, then, are not necessarily distractions from serious learning. Under the right conditions, they may become part of what draws students more deeply into the learning experience.

What is discussed less directly in the studies reviewed here is what such experiences may mean for an educator. A field visit changes the lecturer's position. Instead of being the main source of explanation, the lecturer may become an observer and facilitator while students interact directly with professional practitioners and an authentic workplace environment. This shift provides an opportunity for the educator to observe students in ways that may not be possible during routine classroom teaching. In relation to our visiting experience and exposure, analysing how students respond differently regarding a familiar subject can, in turn, encourage questions about our own teaching practices. This became an important part of teaching reflection because the visit not only changed our understanding towards students; it also influenced how we viewed our teaching.

Analytic autoethnography offered an appropriate way to examine that experience. Autoethnography connects personal experience with wider cultural and professional contexts (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011). Anderson (2006) distinguishes an analytic form in which the researcher is visibly part of the setting but also uses that position to develop a broader theoretical understanding. That distinction matters in this paper. We were not recounting the

visit simply because it was memorable. Rather, we use our position as the lecturers who planned, observed, and participated in the visit to consider what the experience may reveal about experiential learning, place, emotion, and teaching practice.

Taken together, these strands of literature suggest that experience, place, and emotion can intersect during field-based learning. However, the literature reviewed here predominantly examines student perceptions, motivation, engagement, or learning outcomes across disciplines. Less attention has been given to archival and records management education as a distinctive applied context, where material handling, preservation procedures, professional ethics, and institutional settings are central to disciplinary understanding. There is also comparatively little analytic attention to the educators as participant-observers whose own pedagogical assumptions may be unsettled by watching students encounter familiar disciplinary knowledge for the first time. This study addresses that gap by using analytic autoethnography to examine the reciprocal, but analytically distinct, relationship between students situated archival learning and lecturers' self-renewal during a single visit to the National Archives of Malaysia.

Methodology

This study adopts a collaborative analytic autoethnographic approach, drawing on analytic autoethnography as articulated by Anderson (2006). The approach is appropriate because we were full members of the setting who played active roles in planning, accompanying, observing, and reflecting on the visit as lecturers. The collaborative dimension also enabled us to draw on our shared experiences and reflections as lecturer-researchers in the same educational setting. At the same time, the analytic aim is to connect lived experience with broader pedagogical and disciplinary questions, extending beyond personal storytelling. Consistent with analytic autoethnography, the researchers made their positions visible, engaged in systematic self-reflection, and used theory to interrogate rather than merely illustrate the experience (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011).

The reflective corpus comprised four forms of material: (1) personal journal entries concerning our teaching routine and post-visit response; (2) observational notes recorded shortly after the visit, including students' attention, questions, participation and interaction with archival staff; (3) memory-based reconstruction of salient episodes, checked against the journal and observational notes rather than treated as an independent factual record; and (4) naturally occurring student responses available to us in our role as lecturers, including spontaneous comments during and at the end of the visit and the continuation of visit-related discussion in the class WhatsApp group. No formal student interviews, questionnaires, learning tests, or graded reflections were collected for this study. Consequently, claims about students are limited to observable behaviour and expressed responses and are not presented as evidence of durable learning gains.

Analysis was conducted iteratively. We first reread the reflective materials and marked episodes relating to student participation, theory-practice connections, emotional responses, and changes in our own interpretation of teaching. We then compared these episodes across the available sources and grouped recurrent patterns into provisional categories. In the second stage of analysis, we separated student-focused evidence from lecturer-focused reflection to ensure that our own sense of renewal is not used as evidence of student learning. The categories were then interpreted deductively through ELT, place-based pedagogy, and literature on

emotion in learning, while remaining open to patterns that did not fit neatly within those frameworks. This process produced three themes: increased affective engagement, enhanced theory-to-practice integration, and teacher self-renewal. Finally, the identification of the reciprocal process linking students situated participation with our reflective reconsideration of teaching practice is done through rational examination of the themes.

Comparison across sources, reflexive separation of the two units of analysis, and explicit attention is given to evidence that may challenge interpretations to enhance methodological credibility. For example, photographs shared after the visit were not interpreted as evidence of learning, and students' excitement was not treated as equivalent to conceptual mastery. Similarly, Kolb's four modes were used as an interpretive lens rather than claimed as a measured or linear sequence. Our dual roles as lecturers and researchers create an unavoidable interpretive asymmetry: students' accounts were filtered by our observations and their comments naturally available to us. This limitation is central to how the findings are interpreted and presented.

To protect participants' privacy, ethical considerations were maintained by excluding student names and identifiable information from the study. The paper reports only non-identifying, naturally occurring comments and observations that were relevant to the pedagogical analysis. The study does not claim representativeness. Instead, it focuses on generating a theoretically informed account of how experience, place, affect, and educator reflexivity interacted in one archival education setting, as well as identifying propositions that can be examined in future research using student-generated data and comparative designs.

Personal Narrative: The Journey to the National Archives

The visit marked a noticeable change in the usual learning atmosphere. As this was their first academic visit as Diploma students, they arrived early and displayed visible anticipation through their conversations and preparation. We recorded their initial excitement as an affective condition that could be compared with their subsequent attention, questioning, and participation rather than as evidence of learning,

Students were introduced to preservation work, institutional responsibilities, and the practical challenges of protecting records by professional archivists during the introductory briefing at the National Archives. As the briefing progressed, their questions became more specific, such as regarding tools, document lifespan, preservation procedures, and risks to archival materials. The Preservation Section, where archivists demonstrated tissue repair and book-spine sewing involving students trying the procedures themselves, indicated the strongest shift throughout the whole session.

With professional guidance, students took turns handling materials, smoothing repair tissue, and sewing book spines. Further questions from the students, which became more procedural and task-specific, also suggested a shift in their understanding, from asking what preservation means to exploring how it is carried out.

After completing the activity successfully, one student commented, "Madam, I didn't know I could do this!" This spontaneous remark is not considered as a measure of learning achievement, but it is direct evidence of the student's perceived capability at that particular moment. Other students similarly showed interest by requesting further opportunities to

participate and, at the end of the visit, asked whether another visit could be organised in the future.

The experience not only influenced our students but also altered our position as lecturers. This experience encouraged us to change our approach by taking the role of observers and facilitators while allowing our students to interact with practitioners, materials, and the professional environment instead of being the principal explainers of archival concepts. That shift became analytically important because it allowed us to see forms of student participation that were less visible during routine classroom instruction.

Results and Analytical Discussion

Three themes were identified using the iterative analysis: (1) Increased Affective Engagement, (2) Enhanced Theory-to-Practice Integration, and (3) Teacher Self-Renewal. The first two themes are related to students' learning experiences and are supported by their behaviour and spontaneous student responses observed by the lecturers; the third theme reflects our own professional reflection. The distinction between these units is important: student learning cannot be established by lecturers' renewed enthusiasm, just as conceptual change cannot be established by students' visible enjoyment alone. The integrative analysis therefore focuses on how the two processes became related within the same pedagogical event. The themes are interpreted through ELT (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005), place-based perspectives (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002), and literature on emotion in learning (Dirkx, 2006; Zembylas, 2007).

Increased Affective Engagement

The students' engagement with the visit began before the actual day of the trip. As part of the preparation, we appointed a student committee and divided responsibilities among its members. We were pleased with the way they responded to these responsibilities. They were responsible before, during, and after the visit, and this made us feel that they were taking the activity seriously rather than treating it simply as a break from the classroom. Their involvement in the preparation also gave them a role in making the visit happen.

When we arrived at the National Archives, what we noticed first was their excitement. For the students, this was their first experience of visiting an archival institution. They remained disciplined and respectful even though they were clearly excited. When the archive officer explained the job scope within the institution and revealed the activities prepared for the students, they paid close attention to the briefing. We remember being impressed by their attentiveness, as their behaviour in that setting was quite different from how they normally behave in an ordinary class.

As the visit progressed, their curiosity became even more apparent during the tissue repair activity. Throughout the demonstration by the archive officer and hands-on session involving the students, they asked various questions and displayed great passion to understand the steps and ensure that they were conducting the repair properly. As lecturers, watching students express their excitement while working on the task was the most memorable part of the visit since they were eager to experience the process for themselves instead of being passive.

We enjoyed watching how serious the students were in approaching the activity and how pleased they were when good results were produced. We felt happy for their achievement too. As their lecturers, seeing students successfully perform something related to what they had previously encountered through academic learning evoked a sense of satisfaction within us. On that day, we could analyse their understanding by observing how well they completed the tasks; a new method of evaluation other than quizzes or written assessments.

Another aspect that amazed us was that their excitement did not end even when the formal programme finished. They kept on talking about their experience at the archive during the journey home, and the conversation kept returning to the visit. Later, the students shared many photographs from the day in the WhatsApp group. The photographs were not taken as evidence of learning, but their continued conversation and sharing suggested that they had a meaningful experience at the archive.

Taken together, these observations provide a more defensible basis for describing affective engagement than excitement alone. The pattern included voluntary responsibility in planning, sustained attention during professional explanation, repeated questioning, active participation in preservation tasks, requests for further participation, and continued discussion after the programme. Although these behaviours cannot be considered evidence of long-term learning, they suggest that the students were invested both affectively and behaviourally in the learning situation. This interpretation aligns with Dirkx (2006) and Zembylas (2007), who position emotion within educational meaning-making, and with field-based research linking authentic settings with motivation and engagement (Djonko-Moore & Joseph, 2016; Larsen et al., 2017).

Enhanced Theory-to-Practice Integration

The second theme was apparent when the students transitioned from simply listening to actively doing. Preservation and conservation were ideas that had already been introduced through the course, so they were not completely new terms to the students. A new experience for them was the opportunity to encounter preservation work inside an actual archival institution. The first visit to an archive exposed them to the professional setting and gave familiar classroom concepts a different meaning.

The tissue repair activity was particularly important in this respect. At first, the students listened to the explanation by the archive officer and carefully observed the demonstration. Once they tried out the process themselves, their questions became more specific. The questions were no longer focused on asking only what tissue repair was, but more on how to carry it out properly. The need to handle the material carefully, follow the procedure, and evaluate their own work made the concept tangible.

Kolb's (1984) ELT makes the theory-to-practice process more explicit. The students encountered a concrete experience by directly handling materials and attempting tissue repair through the preservation activity. Reflective observation was visible in students' close attention, comparison of their attempts with the archivist's demonstration, and questions about whether procedures were being performed correctly. They were able to reinterpret previously taught ideas such as preservation, fragility, procedure, and stewardship through the professional context, reflecting abstract conceptualization. Active experimentation occurred when students modified their techniques and repeated practical steps with guidance. Rather than functioning as a clean, measurable cycle, these modes appeared to interact with one

another; the analytic value of ELT here is to explain how the visit created opportunities to move among experiencing, reflecting, conceptualising, and acting.

This interpretation is consistent with Kolb and Kolb's (2005) view that experiential learning involves movement between experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. It also echoes research showing that field-based experiences can help students connect course content with real contexts (Djonko-Moore & Joseph, 2016; Krakowka, 2012; Thakur & Cai, 2018). Based on our observation, the students' ability to attach the idea of preservation to a real place, a professional explanation, a physical material, and an action they had performed themselves was the most important difference.

Place-based pedagogy adds a second explanatory layer. The National Archives was more than just a neutral location into which a classroom activity was transferred. The meaning of the learning experience was shaped by the preservation workspace, archival materials, professional tools, institutional routines, and interaction with practising archivists. In Smith's (2002) and Gruenewald's (2003) terms, knowledge became situated in a place with disciplinary and social significance. The students were able to easily connect the concepts to professional roles, material constraints, and workplace decisions by encountering preservation inside the institution responsible for archival stewardship instead of learning through classroom slides, which could only represent the ideas indirectly.

The strongest student-level evidence is therefore not a claim that the visit caused deeper learning, but that it made particular forms of understanding observable. This was evident as the students moved from listening to performing, asked increasingly procedural questions, completed guided preservation tasks, and one student explicitly expressed surprise at their own capability. These indicators support an interpretation of situated theory-to-practice integration while remaining appropriately limited by the absence of pre/post assessment or formal student reflection.

Teacher Self-Renewal

The third theme was more personal and closely connected to our own experience. Over the years, teaching naturally makes various aspects of academic work familiar: the course content, the explanations, the slides, the assessments, and the rhythm of a semester. On the other hand, for the students, entering the archive was a first. This served as a reminder that a familiar concept to lecturers could be something that is completely new for them.

The realization felt more prominent, especially during the tissue repair activity, where the students worked hard to produce an outcome they could be pleased with by listening attentively, asking questions, and attempting the task diligently. Watching their earnestness brought enjoyment to us, which was different from the satisfaction we normally felt after completing a lecture or finishing the syllabus. Since their hands-on learning happened directly in front of us, we could see their visible curiosity, concentration, and sense of achievement as the activity unfolded.

The journey home reinforced that feeling. They were still talking about the archive and the experiences they just had. Later, the photographs shared in their WhatsApp group kept the visit present in their conversations. Listening to them and seeing that continued sharing made us

reflect on the difference between delivering content and creating an experience that students wanted to continue talking about.

The visit became professionally renewing because it changed what we subsequently regarded as sufficient teaching practice. Before the visit, we had largely framed successful delivery around explaining content clearly and completing the syllabus. Observing students interact with archivists and materials shifted our attention toward designing opportunities in which students can encounter, question, and perform disciplinary knowledge. In our post-visit reflection, we therefore moved from seeing the field visit as an enrichment activity to seeing authentic professional contexts as a purposeful complement to classroom explanation. This is the principal change in teaching perspective documented by the autoethnography.

Dirkx (2006) and Zembylas (2007) helped us interpret this emotional response because they locate emotion within the educational experience rather than outside it. In this case, the students' enthusiasm affected how we experienced the visit as their lecturers. Their engagement drew my attention back to the purpose behind the content we routinely teach. The emotional movement was therefore not only from the activity to the students; their response also came back to us.

Analytic autoethnography makes this shift analytically useful by connecting a personal response to a wider pedagogical context. Anderson (2006) argues that visible researcher participation should contribute to broader theoretical understanding. Our self-renewal is therefore interpreted not as proof that field visits rejuvenate educators generally, but as evidence of a reflexive mechanism: when educators temporarily relinquish the role of primary knowledge sources and observe students making meaning with practitioners, materials, and place, familiar teaching content can be re-examined from the learners' perspective. This proposition is specific to the present account and requires investigation across other educators and settings.

Integrative Interpretation of the Three Themes

Looking across the visit, the three themes were intertwined rather than sequential. Responsibility began before the visit through the student committee. Excitement became visible when the students entered an archive for the first time. Careful listening and questioning supported their participation in tissue repair. Their successful participation, in turn, gave us satisfaction as their lecturers. Even after leaving the archive, their conversations and sharing of photographs kept the experience present.

We therefore interpret the visit as a reciprocal pedagogical process rather than a causal model. Student affective engagement supported participation; participation created opportunities to connect archival concepts with material and professional practice; and observing those processes prompted us to reconsider how we design learning opportunities. The contribution lies in showing these processes together while keeping their evidentiary bases separate. This reciprocal lens adds to field-visit research, which commonly privileges student outcomes, by demonstrating how the same situated event can simultaneously function as a learning environment for students and a reflexive site for educators professional learning.

This reciprocal interpretation is particularly relevant to archival and records management education. The discipline depends on forms of knowledge that are difficult to detach from

materials, preservation technologies, institutional responsibilities, professional judgement, and ethical stewardship. The visit therefore did more than make a generic lesson more engaging: it exposed the relationship between disciplinary concepts and the professional place in which those concepts acquire practical consequences. The novelty of this autoethnography is its account of that disciplinary specificity together with the educator's reflexive transformation, an intersection that is not prominent in the field-visit literature reviewed here.

Table 1: Bridging Theory and Practice Through Experiential Learning at the National Archives

Theoretical Dimension	Traditional Classroom Delivery	Real-World Context (National Archive Visit)	Experiential & Cognitive Outcome
Document Preservation	Reading procedures on fragile paper care and chemical deterioration.	Directly handling damaged historic documents using tissue repair methods.	Tactile understanding of material fragility and precision restoration skills.
Archival Stewardship	Memorizing archival standards, ethics, and institutional policies.	Engaging in interactive dialogue with professional practicing archivists.	Appreciation for professional ethics, industry standards, and workplace reality.
Skill Acquisition & Efficacy	Passive observation of static slides or instructional videos.	Executing book spine sewing and document repair under expert guidance.	Heightened self-efficacy (" <i>Madam, I didn't know I could do this!</i> ").

Conclusion

This analytic autoethnography investigated two distinct but related processes arising from a single academic visit to the National Archives of Malaysia. The three themes were developed through iterative analysis and interpreted through ELT, place-based pedagogy, and scholarship on emotion in learning: i) Affective engagement; ii) Theory-to-practice integration; and iii) Teacher self-renewal. Students' observable engagement and theory to practice meaning-making, and our own pedagogical self-renewal as lecturer-researchers. The analysis was grounded in reflective journals, post-visit observational notes, checked memory reconstruction, and naturally occurring student responses.

The theoretical contribution is twofold. First, it can be seen that Kolb's modes of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualising, and acting can overlap in an authentic archival task rather than occur as a simple linear sequence, as illustrated by the visit. Place-based pedagogy further explains why the National Archives mattered: professional tools, materials, practitioners, routines, and institutional purpose formed part of what students were learning. Second, the autoethnographic analysis extends attention from student experience to pedagogical reciprocity. Seeing familiar archival knowledge discovered by the students in a new way prompted us to re-evaluate our own reliance on classroom explanation and to value authentic professional contexts more deliberately in teaching design.

The interpretation of these findings should be within clear limitations. This study is based on two lecturers' interpretive account of one student group and one visit to an institution. Rather than relying on formal interviews, reflective assignments, or pre/post measures, student-related evidence consists of observed participation and spontaneous responses. Consequently, the study cannot be taken as evidence of long-term learning outcomes or universal transformation. In the future, student-authored reflections, interviews, assessment evidence, repeated visits, and comparisons across archival programmes and educators should be incorporated in the research to examine whether the reciprocal pattern identified here is sustained elsewhere.

Despite the limitations, the study suggests that carefully designed academic visits can create conditions in which archival theory becomes materially, professionally, and emotionally meaningful. The sense of 'joy' that drew our attention to the experience in the first place should therefore not be considered as an educational outcome in itself, but as an affective signal within a broader pedagogical process: curiosity and enjoyment accompanied by sustained attention and participation, while gaining a renewed sense of pedagogical purpose as educators who witnessed that level of engagement. In this account, joy matters because it helped reveal when students and lecturers were becoming more invested in disciplinary meaning-making. The educational contribution is thus not that field visits are inherently transformative, but that authentic place, purposeful activity, reflection, and affect can work together to support reciprocal learning in archival education.

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