(SHADOW) LITERACY SPONSORSHIP IN THE ARCHIVE: WOODY GUTHRIE’S CORRESPONDENCE WITH ALAN LOMAX AT THE ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN FOLK SONG

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the power structures of literacy sponsorship (Brandt 1998, 2001) through Woody Guthrie’s correspondence with Library of Congress archivist Alan Lomax during the years 1940-1942. The following questions frame this inquiry: How is sponsorship working between Guthrie and Lomax? Guthrie and the Archive? What kind of sponsorship does the Archive and its digital collection provide and to whom? What do we make of Guthrie’s letters acting as a stand-in or—as I theorize—a “shadow” of him, representing both material and immaterial sponsorship? I contend Guthrie’s dual subject positions as sponsored and sponsor allow him to both follow and complicate Brandt’s definition of literacy sponsorship, which does not leave room for either dueling or complementary sponsors.

Drawing examples from the Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection, I argue that people play different roles, sometimes simultaneously, in sponsorship and thus sometimes act as shadow sponsors. In the theory of sponsorship I advance, both parties can leverage the purpose for which a sponsor “recruited” the sponsored; however, the ability to leverage does not necessarily equalize the relationship and one party will be the shadow sponsor (Brandt 1998; 166). The concept of a shadow sponsor acknowledges the multiplicity of sponsors at any given moment and conceives sponsorship to be more collaborative than “reciprocal” would suggest (Brandt 167). Sponsors and shadow sponsors both participate to co-create literacy and a worldview; they both have something valuable to gain. As a shadow sponsor, Guthrie performs two distinct roles: he sponsors shadows, that is, he leaves shadows or traces of his presence in the Archive, and he complements the other sponsor. Guthrie’s shadow sponsorship in the Archive invites a shift away from the traditional understanding of literacy sponsorship towards the theorization of a complex network of obligation, support, restriction, and collaboration.
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I also wish to thank Todd Harvey at the Archive of American Folklife, Library of Congress, for being a resource and supporting my line of inquiry.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

I have retained Woody Guthrie and Alan Lomax’s use of spelling and grammar throughout.
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INTRODUCTION
In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?
—Woody Guthrie (“This Land.”)

Woody Guthrie’s iconic and oft-appropriated song, “This Land Is Your Land,” is a fitting introduction to a research project on literacy sponsorship. In the song, Guthrie envisions himself “in the shadow of the steeple” with “his people” occupying a particular space and spatial relationship to two major institutions. With the steeple representing religion, it fails to offer “relief” to the people waiting in its shadow, and these people turn to the “relief office,” representing government. While there is a place for these people, it is not inside either institution and neither institution feeds their hunger. Though they might have limited citizenship, these people are a community of sorts and Guthrie both includes himself with this group and acts as its spokesperson “asking / [i]s this land made for you and me?”

Literacy, Morris Young writes, is usually a “trope for citizenship that itself often limited membership to those who could demonstrate specific levels of education, unaccented speech, or markers of belonging that might exclude people of color, immigrants to the United States, or others deemed ‘unfit’” (64). Guthrie and his people seek “a type of cultural citizenship” that will offer services, “a number of rights and sense of identity” (66). The “markers of belonging” to gain access to greater privileges of citizenship are decipherable through one’s written and spoken output, or how well one uses his literacy skills to perform an identity. In the communal space Guthrie imagines between the steeple and the relief office he establishes the link between literacy and identity as one “intertwined in expressing personhood and value as a full human being” (70).
Exploring relationships of literacy sponsorship—and literacy is always sponsored in some way—offers the opportunity to explore the link between literacy and identity because we examine not just what people can do when granting and granted literacy, we also examine the material implications to who they are and how they move in the world. Looking for sponsorship “helps us to understand the way literacy is both metaphorical and material” and the ways in which it is “implicated and embedded in our culture” (Young 63). Like Young, I base my research on Deborah Brandt’s theoretical construct of “sponsors of literacy,” and agree with Young “literacy is embodied,” shaped by “categories of identity” with “material consequences” (63).

Brandt defines literacy sponsors as “any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (1998; 166). In her interview-based ethnography *Literacy in American Lives* (2001), Brandt connects literacy to broader social-economic structures that “enable” it and “confer” its status as a resource (2001; 1). Literacy is an active agent in society, and how individuals use it and recognize its use “contribute to their sense of identity, normality, possibility” (11). Because literacy is a commodity, individuals or institutions that grant or prohibit access protect it and they are called “sponsors” (28). Her idea of sponsorship aims to describe the relationships and ideologies at “scenes of literacy learning” (20). Although the motivations of the sponsor and sponsored are not necessarily identical, the sponsor acts as a conduit and “represent[s] the causes into which people’s literacy usually gets recruited”; thus, the sponsor and sponsored are in a “reciprocal relationship” (1998; 167).

According to Shirley Brice Heath, literacy can be used for a variety of needs and Guthrie uses it to invite collaborative meaning making (230). Scribbled along the edge of the lyrics to his
song “Talking Blues,” he writes the “main idea is to add your own verse… if you don’t you’ve
got to forfeit something” (“Talking Blues.”). In this dashed-off note, Guthrie’s writing explicitly
connects his understanding of a participatory literacy to material consequences and his writing
“mediates” his identity across “contexts” (Heath 231). The note’s invitational pull suggests we
could read the correspondence with attention to citizenship and civil rights. Brandt actually
concludes Literacy in American Lives with a call to re-examine how literacy use and access has
challenged the “potential worth and reach of basic rights” as our economy develops and
precludes segments of the population lacking certain literate privilege (2001; 206). I suggest
rights and citizenship can be examined by studying the instability of literacy sponsors.

Whereas Brandt’s work, and much of subsequent work on sponsorship, takes shape as
person-based ethnography or historiography to focus on life-stories, my work takes shape from
archival resources. I examine the power structures of literacy sponsorship through folksinger
Woody Guthrie’s correspondence primarily with archivist Alan Lomax at the Archive of
American Folk Song (hereafter referred to as “Archive”) at the Library of Congress (hereafter
referred to as “LOC”) during the years 1940-1942 with material from correspondence with other
LOC staff through 1950.¹ How is sponsorship working between Guthrie and Lomax? How is it
working between Guthrie and the Archive? What kind of sponsorship does the Archive and its
digital collection (hereafter referred to as “digital collection” and “digital archive”) provide and
to whom? What do we make of Guthrie’s letters acting as a stand-in or shadow of him
representing both material and immaterial sponsorship? Can we understand sponsorship as
collaborative and multidirectional?

In order for us to understand the relationship between Guthrie and Library of Congress
archivist Alan Lomax as one of literacy sponsorship, we must refine a definition of literacy. The
term “literacy” has been applied in a variety of ways to mean basic instruction in reading and writing to the ability to make meaning out of financial documents, video games and so on. Guthrie and Lomax’s relationship is not about basic skills acquisition nor is it simply ethnography of poor folks’ literacy. I am arguing that their relationship is one of textually based instruction and co-construction that requires and invites collective meaning making. Heath would explain that in “communities of literate practices” writers, like Guthrie, “compose themselves for reflection and response as writers, readers, speakers, and actors” (231).

Whose literacy Guthrie, Lomax, and the Archive sponsor is a fraught question, and the answer involves tracing the role of the shadow sponsor. Using the Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection to draw examples, I claim literacy sponsorship may have two types of sponsors: Lomax tends to perform the traditional role and Guthrie tends to perform as the shadow sponsor. The concept of a shadow sponsor acknowledges the multiplicity of sponsors at any given moment and conceives sponsorship to be more collaborative than “reciprocal” would suggest. Sponsors and shadow sponsors both participate to co-create literacy and a worldview; they both have something valuable to gain. Guthrie’s agreement to aid Lomax in service of the Archive’s mission to collect folk songs was not initiated with a sense of veneration, and Guthrie demonstrates his irreverence for a controlled sponsorship by not fully submitting to Lomax as sponsor. He makes this clear by his facetious tone in a letter to Lomax: “How’s the skid row section of the poor folks division of the Library of Congress? Thats some joint. Ill come over some day and make you some more records” (Guthrie 1942). Here the interactional power resides in Guthrie’s ability to call out the Archive’s plan to incorporate society’s undesirables into a designated space within its larger space (thus, still separate), poke fun of the Archive and its work, and then claim his power as the source of material doing Lomax a favor. The sheer
aplomb in these three sentences reveals that Guthrie as sponsored knows that his literacy will be “used” but instead of merely being “used” by the sponsors (Lomax saving the letter and the Archive including the letter in its collection), the letter has traces of Guthrie’s resistance and his letters “use” their materiality to mark that resistance from their place within the Archive. These letters with their traces of resistance are the shadows Guthrie sponsors and they are already in the Archive when we approach it.

As Guthrie complies with Lomax’s requests for material, he continually interrupts the relationship of sponsor-sponsored to perform as a shadow sponsor. His contributions are more than “stuff” to satisfy the Archive’s mission and Lomax’s agenda, though they do; his contributions offer social critique instead of odes praising the famous men and ideologies shaping the broader national discourse about life in the United States. More than that, Guthrie’s contributions enact citizenship that may not necessarily mirror the space outside the Archive. Because his contributions reside within the Archive, the Archive performs as a sponsor and shadow sponsor, and it cannot restrict one role without restricting the other. Archival resources invite reading for multiple perspectives and tend to represent (or, at least, suggest) multiple perspectives. This affordance aided my developing the concept of the shadow sponsor, and the ways in which the Archive can perform as sponsor and shadow sponsor point to the ways in which it shapes our present understanding and acknowledges the potentially on-going nature of sponsorship long after the participants are gone. As I discuss how Guthrie and the Archive can perform as shadow sponsors and sponsors, I consider how the Archive continues to shape our understanding of the past and complicates the sponsoring activities in the Guthrie, Lomax, and Archive triangulation.² The network of relationships can be illustrated with the graphic below.
CONTEXT: THE COLLECTION AND ITS SHAPERS

After getting his radio debut in Los Angeles in July 1937 and a taste for political activism, an ever-restless Guthrie made his way to New York City in 1940 (Cray 102). Guthrie soon met folk archivist Alan Lomax on March 3rd at the Forrest Theatre when both were on the roster to perform “for the benefit of the John Steinbeck Committee for agricultural workers” (Nowlin 8). Lomax wanted Guthrie to create and contribute items to the Archive, and invited Guthrie to Washington, D.C. to record him speaking and singing for the LOC (“Biography.”). The Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection consists of letters, postcards, essays, and songs spanning the years 1935-1950. Whereas “Guthrie typed, wrote, and drew on brown paper bags, tissue paper, and envelopes, as well as on standard paper sizes and types,” the correspondence to him from LOC personnel “exists primarily as typed carbon copies on onionskin” (“Building the Digital Collection.”). While the LOC has a vast amount of Guthrie’s songs, they are noticeably absent from the digital archive.3 In 1987 then-archivist Marsha Maguire processed the collection, which had previously been primarily stored in vertical files, and moved it into mylar and acid-free folders inside manuscript boxes. In 2000 then-archivist Nora Yeh wished to preserve the
collection by scanning it with the LOC’s Preservation Reformatting Division (PRD), and James Hodson from the PRD cooperated with digital conservationists to scan and create the images (“Acknowledgements.”). It is unclear when the digital collection went online.

The LOC describes the collection as follows:

The body of materials presented online highlights Woody Guthrie as an often humorous, often serious writer of prose. The World War II-era exchange between U. S. Government employees in Washington, D.C., and the Oklahoma-born, Texas-bred recent transplant to New York contrasts with Woody’s usual image as Oklahoma Dust Bowl refugee. It documents Guthrie at the beginning of his commercial recording career, at work on his autobiographical novel, and gaining renown in New York intellectual and artistic circles. It likewise shows that Alan Lomax and his successors at the Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress were charmed and impressed by Guthrie’s cleverness, talent, wry humor, and political acumen. (“About the Collection.”)

The scanned images of the manuscript items indicate, and the LOC directs our attention to, the differences between Guthrie’s material artifacts and those of the LOC. The LOC notes that the material Guthrie used is of lesser quality and seems haphazard compared to the sterile carbon copy onionskin the LOC used. The state of the artifacts, thus, serves as another reminder of the unequal power relationship between the parties. As “objects of literacy,” the material within the Archive act as “surrogates for the interests of absent others” (Brandt and Clinton 350). Although it is unclear what evidence the LOC consulted to determine that employees were “charmed” and “impressed” by Guthrie, the LOC’s description indicates that the Archive was shaped according to its wishes—or, interpretation of the correspondence—to present a certain Guthrie (“About the
As with most interpretation, we are reminded alternative interpretations exist and through the very process of material selection the LOC and Lomax’s correspondence could narrate an alternate story about the sponsorship relationship between Guthrie, Lomax, the Archive, and its visitors. As a shadow sponsor, Guthrie performs two roles: he sponsors shadows, that is, he leaves shadows or traces of his presence in the Archive, and he complements the other sponsor, whether it is Lomax or the Archive.

**METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

As my primary interest is to examine the correspondence between Guthrie and Lomax for power differentials to describe literacy sponsorship and the shadow sponsor, I adopted critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a methodology. With CDA I explain who is intended as sponsored and what values that sponsorship transmits and conceals through the archive material. CDA extends the tradition within the field of rhetoric and composition of examining the how language can be a tool for persuasion and “has always been concerned with the power of spoken and written discourse” (Huckin et al. 109). Specifically, CDA “routinely engages texts that reflect inequality or other abuses of power” thus, it “is always critical and explanatory” (109).

My methodology aligns with Norman Fairclough’s claim discourse is shaped by social conditions, texts are encoded with the politics of its producer, and it is the analyst’s role to intervene in these “complex and invisible relationships” (19, 27). CDA is already pre-disposed for the shadow influences. Power relations are indicative of struggle; language is used in and concerned with power and class struggle; and language is always already deployed by those with power and those who wish to usurp it (Fairclough 34-35). Particularly important to this study are the cross-cultural exchanges or “gatekeeping encounters,” which feature powerful
participants “controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants” (47-48; emphasis in original). Standard English is one area in which power relations are evident because its adoption inscribed a hierarchy of dialects and enacted the capitalist “subordination of the working class” (55-57). The complicated and shifting socio-economic relationship between Guthrie, Lomax, and the Archive demands a CDA to reveal the controls, constraints, and any affordances imposed on and yielded to Guthrie as representative of the “poor folks” (Guthrie 1942). Furthermore, linking a CDA to my definition of literacy reveals the link between how one writes and how one views the world and his place in it.

Although discourse analysis cannot yield an “absolute reliability,” the stress on “plausible interpretation” attained through induction supports its use as a methodology in search of substantiating “generalization(s) or claim(s) about the meaning relations between features, texts, and their contexts” (Barton 22-23). With this in mind, I consulted Fairclough’s list of questions (reproduced in Appendix A) to ask relating to vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures and read through the correspondence between Guthrie and Lomax looking for power differentials. As this research required reading the corpus carefully, I adopted a recursive method of reading, re-reading, and annotating. To collect data on the correspondence as a corpus, I copied the text-based transcripts the digital collection provides for each piece of correspondence and pasted this text into word processing documents. I did this for Guthrie and Lomax individually and collectively, and removed the inserted titles and the LOC’s italicized notations (like “deleted text” and “inserted text”). Where words were deleted in the manuscript, I deleted them from the transcript. Spelling, punctuation, capitalizations, and grammatical errors in the transcript were not corrected. I pasted the Guthrie material into Voyant Tools (www.voyant-tools.org), a web-based tool to analyze text, and enabled the stop words list (removing words like “the” and “and”)
to generate word counts and a word cloud (see Appendix B). I repeated this for Lomax’s material to be able to compare the volume of word usage (writing) each did and the most popular topics in their writing. I also had access to a searchable transcript of the LOC recording sessions between Lomax and Guthrie.

As a researcher my intervention is filtered through the lenses of my theoretical and methodological framing. I wish to acknowledge that I was looking for examples of power differentials between Guthrie and Lomax and how the Archive and digital collection may impose or re-inscribe those differentials. I also wish to acknowledge my particular position as a white, female graduate student in English at a large, high-level research institution in the Northeast. I think it would be too simplified to align my position with the center of authority (or, institutional power) because of my experience as a female, first-generation Greek-American. I was raised on Greek folk songs and folk dances, and only one generation separates myself from family members hailing from rural villages that some might classify as having low-literacy in their native language, let alone in English as a second language. In Guthrie’s writing (and posturing) I recognized the link between literacy, identity, and citizenship that I relate to and this similarity helped me feel connected to his story and a history otherwise foreign. I did not grow up aware of Guthrie and came to know his work through contemporary music artists visiting the Woody Guthrie Center and Archives and recording his songs to their music. Any researcher who adopts CDA should make her inclinations explicit and, in order to minimize false assumptions, I read the definitive biographies of both Guthrie and Lomax (see references) as recommended by folklife specialist (archivist) at the LOC, Todd Harvey. The biographies have added context where there was little or none, sometimes correcting my assumptions, and sometimes confirming them. As best they could, the biographies served as surrogates for my subjects.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

My literature search revealed that literature about folk songs rarely come up in rhetoric and composition; similarly, while there is literature on folk story and folklore, it is usually identified as either African American or Latino/a. The genre of “folk” seems to be mostly comprised of folk story and folklore, but not folk song or folk singing; related literature on song writing and songs tends to be written for pedagogical purposes and focus on popular songs, children’s songs, and hip-hop songs. Cassandra Parente’s “Traditional Form, Subversive Function: Aunt Molly Jackson’s Labor Struggles” (2013) and Jeff Rice’s “Folksono(me)” (2008) are two notable articles addressing folk singers. Parente frames her study to address “collective rhetorical action” and correct what she calls “scholars’ default portrayal of working-class women as silent and invisible” (161). She frames the folk singing tradition in rhetorical terms and notes the singer, as rhetor, “needed to embody the appropriate ethos,” which must be “gained through shared experience” (164). Aunt Molly Jackson is Guthrie’s contemporary and also recorded for Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress; Parente’s work establishes the rhetorical nature of the folk tradition and its implications supports my work. Once bedside visitor and disciple, Bob Dylan succeeds Guthrie, and Rice discusses a pivotal moment in Bob Dylan’s career as a moment when “information classification” was disturbed by Dylan’s on-stage use of electric guitar (182). His piece is about rhetorical studies, pedagogy, and the typical “encounter” with new media to update existing practices or to challenge disciplinary assumptions regarding meaning making (182). Rice develops the idea of “folksono(me)” as a system of linking that “is not the end of communal meaning or current classification” because “blending of categories generates other kinds of encounters,” and his work is currently tangential (205).
Antoinette Burton (2005) draws attention to a modern version of Jacques Derrida’s “archive fever” fueled by the widespread use of the Internet to store, retrieve, and explore information and the ease to do so (4). Historiography requires the admission that no archive is disconnected or free from what she calls “dynamic relationships” to time, people, and environmental and political factors (6). She makes this connection to underscore the very real and embodied pressures influencing the histories researchers write (and do not write), and do not often share, in a time when modern archive fever tends to obscure the contending and accommodating forces battling in the archive (9). While I do not write much about how the research process affected me, I do trace the kinds of relationships Burton mentions in tracing shadow sponsorship. Within the field of rhetoric and composition, Robert J. Connors’s (1992) concern is the history of the field itself and its writing, his discussion extrapolates various sources of data, among which he includes “terministic screens,” or our preconceived ideas and theoretical lens that inform the questions we ask and the answers we propose (21). Connors draws attention to them to highlight what happens in the archive: we try to understand it but “it is always a construction” (21). I find his two questions about drawing interpretations from historical sources and what we might learn about the future and past from the interpretation interesting to consider in relation to the shadow sponsor and his projection through time and space in material and immaterial ways (30).

More recently, Alexis Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L’Eplattenier, and Lisa Mastrangelo (2010) edited a collection focused on archival research methods for rhetoric and composition. In sum, the work draws attention to the work of archivists, the lack of information on how to do archival research, guidance to create composition archives, and reflections about the ways in which the type of archival material and its location could influence the researcher’s
experience and understanding. Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch (2010) encourage digressions from typical disciplinary material to investigate other sources and argue for the generative potential of choosing a different research site because such a choice will alter the people, experiences, and revelations to be addressed (18). Not only do they call for greater awareness of our theoretical framings, but also to note our investment is a separate stake, that together with our theoretical framing “enhances and limits our work” (22).

Lynée Lewis Gaillet and Lynn Z. Bloom offer practical lessons for archival research. Gaillet (2010) responds to her perception about a lack of “codified information” passed to new scholars, and she offers a guide on how to prepare and conduct archival research (29). Bloom (2010) provides her own experience in compiling a collection of anthologies as a case study to describe the role of planning and serendipity fueling efforts to create a new archive, as well as how to conduct research on that material. Sammie L. Morris and Shirley K. Rose (2010) join as archivist and researcher to explain how each one works in the archive and what values and procedures each is concerned with; their collaboration helped me understand why I faced challenges and gaps trying to find information I thought was necessary to contextualize my research (52). For example, the kind of deep description that a researcher in the field tends to desire is not typically within the scope of the archivist’s role, who is charged with creating brief, high-level descriptions of collections instead of focusing on particular items (69, 65).

Alexis Ramsey (2010) describes three types of archives: the hidden, the partially hidden/partially processed, and the visible, which can be the traditional archive and the digital (79). Bridging discussions about the traditional archive to its digital version, Ramsey stresses how the digital highlights the “created nature of all archives” and the digital can be more created than a traditional archive because of the additional selection, work and resources necessary to
make a collection digital (85). Her point is that distinctions between types of archives are constantly changing, and a researcher should be aware of how the selected research site is adjusting and how the type of site “affects research outcomes in both positive and negative ways” (88, 85). Most related to my work is Ramsey’s claim that the transition to the digital archive disrupts and “reinterprets the singular topology” of the archive by decentralizing the authority and access restrictions of the traditional archive; this is most clearly evident by the digital’s existence in the “nonlocation /sic/ of cyberspace” (86).

Questioning how the digital archive can be used to restrict access to some while granting access to strengthen a community, Ellen Cushman (2013) focuses on how the Cherokee nation, built its own members-only digital archive and returned meaning and knowledge production to its appropriate cultural context (116). Cushman’s work with the nation to develop an educational curriculum “operate[d] through the co-construction of knowledge based on interactions between storytellers and listeners” instead of the archive as an institution instilling categorization onto its participants and materials (116). Like her work, my work is interested in collaboration that blurs the line between participants and resource providers. Also, Cushman’s work reveals the digital archive may be a site of “linguistic and cultural perseverance” instead of serving cultural traditions that posit the archive as a site of “preservation” and “hermetically sealed, contained, and unchanging” (117). My questions about the relationships shaping and animating the archive are, in part, in service of disrupting the preservation ethos and show how the material in the archive can be best appreciated by acknowledging its potential to project shadow sponsors and present their shadows, which demand collaboration to make their meaning known.

Similarly advocating for a focus on local scenes, Shannon Carter and Kelly L. Dent (2013) stress the unlikelihood that “literate interactions [are] entirely local in origin or effect”
Their digital project demonstrates how local and global events connect to “lived experiences, and material events that gave rise to them” (155). Although Carter and Dent do not present an agenda concerned with exposing and explaining the power differentials that defines the CDA I perform, the their data source annotation is intent to “deconstruct” what the remix project fuses in order to “offer multiple meanings” instead of the linear narrative created by the remix (159). These alternative meanings (and reading paths) are not exactly how I describe shadow sponsorship, but they are suggestive of the disruptive power in seeking ways to animate ideological and authoritative discrepancies already etched onto archival material. They invoke Jeff Rice’s idea of the network as a “social, political, and, above all else, rhetorical… system through which representations ‘suggest’ meaning” (162). I, too, invoke the network as a way to explain sponsorship, but the linking mechanism in the network I explain are projections and not “representations” because the effects and affective nature of sponsorship is more than representational.

Research on literacy sponsorship is rooted in Brandt’s work (1998, 2001) and draws from her earlier work *Literacy as Involvement* (1990). John Duffy (2003, 2007) is also concerned with the formation of social identity through literacy and extends Brandt’s work in examining how literacy helps people imagine, perform, and become individuals. He calls this a “rhetorical approach to literacy,” so if literacy reflects and is reflective of a specific worldview(s), we should be able to use the products of that literacy—like correspondence—to construct an understanding of the writer’s worldview (*i.e.*, his social identity) (2003; 55). Through writing, Duffy explains, individuals “use written language to turn aside, re-create, and re-imagine” their identities and roles (2007; 18). I adopt this approach because Guthrie’s rhetoric of literacy is a
textual representation of his identity: how he presents himself and understands the world can be inferred by his use of literacy skills (i.e., how he writes and what he writes about).

Offering an overview of current work on literacy sponsorship is the edited collection *Literacy, Economy, and Power* (2014) with contributions by Ellen Cushman, Morris Young, Kim Donehower, Eli Goldblatt and David Jolliffe, Beverly Moss and Robyn Lyons-Robinson, and Michael Smith. As the following paragraphs suggest, I find much of this research informative and inspiring, but I intend to further complicate Brandt’s formulations about literacy sponsorship where others leave off. Cushman tells the story of Elias Boudinot in his role as editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper and the “consent” he needed as sponsor to the Cherokee nation and supportive individuals outside the nation (2014; 14). She reads the “boundary” of sponsorship descriptive of how sponsorship affects the sponsored (15). Her findings explain the sponsor’s “complex role” as “mediator” and suggest a seesaw balancing act for Boudinot “caught betwixt and between” his sponsoring efforts of the nation and those outside it (16-18). My work contorts this construction of sponsorship as a seesaw (read: still linear) into a triangular construction and posits the power of a specific mediator known as the shadow sponsor.

Young (2014) focuses on the life and narrative of Henry Obookiah as a literacy narrative to develop the idea of literacy as “embodied” and tied to identity and citizenship (63). Young’s work, ultimately, informs my thinking about literacy as it relates to citizenship, the material and immaterial implications of sponsorship, and “how material objects may function to sponsor literacy” (62). I take his work alongside Brandt’s work with Kate Clinton about the “objects of literacy” (2002). Brandt and Clinton “grant technologies of literacy” the “capacity to travel, a capacity to stay intact, and a capacity to be visible and animate outside the interactions of immediate literacy events” because of “the legibility and durability of literacy: its material forms,
its technological apparatus, its objectivity, that is, its (some)thing-ness” (344). They note recognizing sponsors at literacy sites “links humans and things in at least two important ways,” and those ways are by questioning the materials and decoding the “multiple interests or agents that are usually active” and tend to function as “surrogates for the interests of absent others” (350). In literacy sponsorship, then, the sponsored needs to realize what the sponsor likely already knows: “[w]hen we use literacy, we get used” and “[t]hings typically mediate this relationship (350). I continue the work of Young and Brandt and Clinton in developing the agency of material objects in the Archive and considering how those objects act as sponsors.

Donehower (2014) revisits Brandt’s earlier project in *Literacy as Involvement* to explain the literacy practices she observed as a visitor to a women’s book club in the hamlet of Hammond, North Dakota. In *Literacy as Involvement*, Brandt maintains developing literacy is a concomitant realization of “the action that written language relates to” (1990; 1, 8). Rather than motivating the acquisition of literacy, social involvement is also “its interpretive underpinning” (103). Because users learn and know what to do in scenes of reading and writing, Brandt claims “literate knowledge *is* a knowledge embodied in a doing” and we cannot dissever producing it from the thing itself (117; emphasis in original). Scenes of reading and writing are scenes of ongoing social involvement wherein readers and writers make sense around and through a text by relating to it in different ways fashioned out of their lived experiences (125-126). I agree with Donehower that literacy does things and asks readers and writers to do things, and I can trace this in the sponsorship amongst Guthrie, Lomax, and the Archive. Also like Donehower, I think Brandt’s earlier work offers a method to examine what happens at community reading and writing scenes, but whereas Donehower uses this method to theorize “community sustainability” and how a community could continue to exist through literate use, I use it to help understand
sponsorship in a posthumous and sometimes immaterial form where the text asks its readers to remake an imagined community (98).

Goldblatt and Jolliffe (2014) turn the conversation into a critique of the implications of Brandt’s wording that sponsors “gain advantage.” They caution, “‘gain advantage’ does not exhaust the story of sponsorship” and not “to define gain narrowly or quickly” (Goldblatt and Jolliffe 127, 135). Sponsors, they write, “take risks… can be harmed, altered, or even transformed by the population… they contract to teach” (127). Risks and transformations are outlined as the pair offers examples of partnerships between higher education institutions and community organizations to substantiate their claim of the risks and rewards when the sponsor’s power is decentralized. Goldblatt and Jolliffe conclude sponsors “must change” by compromising centralized authority “in order to gain a new student population and social approval for ‘reaching out’ and ‘giving back’” (135). Moreover, they believe “some of the largest gains” might be “unexpected” like realizing a need to alter “old practices” and “attitudes,” thus the sponsor should be less rigid in categorizing and assessing the “gains” he seeks (135). My work extends the idea of distributing the power of the sponsor(s) and suggests the power compromise can be envisioned as a collaborative approach to sponsorship. While Goldblatt and Jolliffe suggest partnerships with co-sponsors existing perhaps “on the outside” of the relationship, I turn the focus to participants within the sponsorship relationship to argue that the shadow sponsor is already present and waiting to be operationalized from within.

Moss and Lyons-Robinson (2014) also take issue with the role of the sponsor and challenge the “hierarchical relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored” (138). Not only do Moss and Lyons-Robinson contend that sponsors may not command power, as a reading of Brandt would suggest, they also disagree that a sponsor “necessarily set[s] the terms of access”
In explaining her role in a women’s organization, Lyons-Robinson describes literacy sponsorship as “a two-way street” (142). “As such as I may have served to sponsor the literacy development of these extraordinary women,” Lyons-Robinson writes, “over the years each of them has shaped my own cultural and social literacy” (142). Lyons-Robinson is hesitant to name herself a sponsor because her understanding of Brandt’s sponsor as “giving but not receiving” does not reflect her experience and participants in her group did not lack “agency,” which she thinks sponsorship “suggests” (142). Moss, completing the ethnographic study on Lyons-Robinson’s group and her role within it, notes the difference between her case study and Brandt’s “notion of reciprocity” is that Robyn’s “gains” are not contingent on “the success of her fellow club-women” and this “questions what sponsorship may bring—an implied power differential, a sense of the sponsor controlling access to literacy” (142-143). Like Moss and Lyons-Robinson, my work complicates Brandt’s implied power differentials and claims “roles and relationships are dynamic; they shift and change” (148). I extend Moss’s claim that “power is shared” to theorize a shift from the “reciprocal” nature of sponsorship to a collaborative one that acknowledges the destabilized roles in sponsorship (143).

Taking a different tack, Smith (2014) considers how English as a discipline is a “distant and abstract” sponsor of his literate activity and how “classrooms could be arranged to provide students with concrete and local sponsors who could serve to authorize students’ literate activity as they were moving to being able to draw upon the sponsorship of the discipline” (155-156). While my work does not consider implications of sponsorship in the classroom, I am interested in drawing the discipline’s attention to Guthrie. Smith picks up Brandt’s concept of “accumulating literacy” (1995) to encourage the “reform” he thinks students “resistant” to “introduce new literacies” are in need of (162). Similarly, I agree with Smith that teaching other
types of readings and writing styles is not “at the expense of time spent on more canonical ones” (162). Our discipline has overlooked Guthrie as a writer of books, essays, poems and songs despite his canonization in other fields like music and continued popularity in American culture. There is something about Guthrie not being credited as a writer by the sponsoring institution (i.e., English as a discipline and writing studies as a subfield) that continuously leaves him out while lauding his pal John Steinbeck. Perhaps Guthrie is a shadow sponsor to the discipline, inspiring others but he left out.

Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist (2012) followed Kenneth Burke’s claim that the “scene of narrative—its telling and collecting—may be vitally important to the act of narrative” and investigate the sponsorship environment in addition to the relationship (173; emphasis in original). They formulate a “narrative methodology for inquiring into literacy sponsorship” and propose their video (camera and videotape) is “both a tool and an actor” in sponsorship relationships (173). Halbritter and Lindquist posit that the research process itself can be illuminating, and their work supports a methodology that re-positions and enables the researcher to pursue a “story about learning to operationalize the discovery of forms and meanings of literacy sponsorship” and employ a “purposeful deferral of disciplinary interpretation at particular stages” (173). Similar to Halbritter and Lindquist, I inquire about sponsorship relationships and the locations of those relationships. However, instead of videotaping and creating an archive of narrative information like Halbritter and Lindquist, I treat the archive as “both a tool and an actor” and examine the material consciously created and curated for the archive. Unlike Halbritter and Lindquist, I do not have direct access to my subjects to ask them their experience and, therefore, shaped this thesis to “go behind the scenes” of the Archive to question how the Archive manipulates their relationship.
**HERMENEUTICS OF THE SHADOW**

I sell the shadow to support the substance.
—Sojourner Truth

*The Shadow*

Guthrie’s rhetoric of literacy was formulated around populist values and participatory engagement, which exemplifies his desire to be intimate with the plight of common people. By being sponsored and shadow sponsor simultaneously, Guthrie demonstrates how writing could “construct new identities and social positions” (Duffy 2007; 18). I contend Guthrie’s dual subject positions allow him to both follow and complicate Brandt’s definition of literacy sponsorship, which does not leave room for either dueling or complementary sponsors when she writes sponsors are “agents… who enable, support, teach, model” and “recruit, regulate, suppress or withhold literacy” to “gain advantage” (Brandt 1998; 166). The “reciprocal relationship” Brandt describes seems linear by its directed nature: I sponsor you, you gain literacy, and I get an advantage (167). That seems emblematic of a capitalist system, in this case, of literacy and rhetorical production wherein the sponsor is the capitalist employing workers who learn particular skills for the boss’s benefit first and foremost. While Brandt consistently reminds readers that she is concerned with the material effects of literacy sponsorship and their place within a larger system of economy, power and culture, she does not seem to offer room for a rival or complement to her sponsor. We need a more capacious and collaborative concept of sponsorship to accommodate the type of relationship exemplified existing between Guthrie, Lomax, the Archive, and visitors.

Adapting the concept of the shadow from art history and photography affords literacy research a heuristic for explicating the shadow sponsor. A shadow, according to art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, is the “interception of light by one’s body… represent[ing] the absence
of light, a withholding” (20). During the nineteenth century, portraits by photographers were typically termed “shadows.” Creating a photograph before modern advances and digital photography was a two-step process: the first step would create the negative and the second step would create the positive. The negative, which evokes the idea of “withholding” by “put[ting] darkness for light, and light for darkness” and by “invent[ing] the image” renders the positive so the “negative’s dark areas block the action of light—thus producing the final print” (Grigsby 21). The shadow, then, can illuminate what is and what is not “in the light,” so to speak, by drawing attention to perspective and perception, most evident by the two-step processing of negatives and positives. Even though the shadow “is by definition nonidentical [sic] with the person who causes it,” it “represents the vestige, or residue, of a body’s encounter with a camera, and that encounter is over” (Grigsby 20). Shadows have substance and move; they are reminders of who was where and stand-in as material evidence long after the body vanishes.

The shadow is simultaneously immaterial and material, as the story of Sojourner Truth makes clear. At the time of her emancipation in 1827, Truth was illiterate but, as she became more involved with “religious fanatics and mystics,” she was inspired to write and publish a slave narrative and travel the country as an evangelist (Collins 183-184). To subsidize her expenses, she sold small, carte-de-visite portraits of herself. Truth had the above epigram printed on her shadows, and her decision to include it underscores her ownership of her photographic likeness and her ability to generate an income. Truth’s propensity to “sell the shadow” indicates the “shadow is also the site of value” (Grigsby 24). To sell one’s shadow at lectures or through newspaper advertisements like Truth did demonstrates “aware[ness] of the power of the portrait to advertise herself and, by extension, her beliefs” (Collins 193). Purchasing, mailing and
exchanging these prints also support the shadow as a “sign of mobility across distances” (Grigsby 20).

Guthrie’s correspondence, its mailing, and his appearing in Washington, D.C., are signs of his “mobility across distance” like the carte-de-visite. The songs he collects (material) and performs (content, production) are also signs of this type of mobility. Because Guthrie is working or looking for work as he travels, collects songs, and performs, there is an embodied class-conscious element to his mobility: he does not travel for leisure and actually seeks the most authentic experience of limited citizenship that correlates to the proletariat and migratory workers. The shadow, as a manifestation of something or someone no longer present, stands in for abstract interests, and being objects of literacy, travel distances that are “material and metaphorical” (Young 63). Guthrie sponsors shadows that exist in the Archive and remind us of the embodied nature of literacy while appearing disembodied and virtual in the on-site and digital collections.

My critical analysis of the correspondence between Guthrie and Lomax reveals the complicated struggle inherent in literacy sponsorship to substantiate my claim that the story the digital collection (and by extension, the Archive) wants to tell is not the only story and is not entirely supported by the material. What the LOC describes as going on in its digital collection does not match what is in the material; this discrepancy, combined with an examination of the interactions behind the creation of the Archive, offers a more complex and interesting story. My study suggests literacy sponsorship features collaboration, a shadow sponsor, and that the shadow is operational inside the Archive. I first adopted this idea of shadow sponsorship from imagining Guthrie’s role as a seasoned performer: he relied on his audience to sing along and thereby, make the songs their own and demonstrating that performing is an interactive form of
literacy sponsorship because it rhetorically creates new spaces and subject positions for those involved. A seasoned performer pays attention to his audience and if they seem unenthused or incapable of grasping the song, it indicates disconnection. Guthrie and Lomax, who performed as well, would have been accustomed to audience response and the element of expectation seems to be in their correspondence; it is in the way they sponsor each other to make sense together. Instead of one wielding “tight ideological control,” Guthrie and Lomax seem to share similar ideology and thus, share their “control” in the sponsorship. This kind of sponsorship is more of an interactive give-and-take like the experience of performing in front of fans. A shadow sponsor is less concerned about performing (or respecting) the gatekeeping role traditionally associated with sponsorship.

*Reading the Collection: Lomax as Sponsor, Guthrie as Sponsor*

A traditional reading of literacy sponsorship would describe Lomax as trying to institute a type of controlled sponsorship of Guthrie but would severely limit Guthrie’s ability to influence Lomax; Brandt’s “reciprocity” falls short because both correspondents establish themselves as sponsors for each other and the Archive. Lomax is like Brandt’s traditional sponsor in that he performs as a gatekeeper who initiates the relationship with Guthrie. I understand their relationship as one of literacy sponsorship even though they do not teach each other how to read or write, as the most strident understanding of literacy would demand; but, Lomax wanted to launch Guthrie as a professional writer and the relationship he nurtured with Guthrie is unlike that of other artists whom he invited to record for the Archive. Lomax chooses Guthrie among a number of other potentially talented performers. For example, Aunt Molly Jackson, who also performed at the Forrest Theatre the night Lomax and Guthrie met, recorded for the Archive; yet, Lomax never sent her any correspondence. Each time her name appears in
Lomax’s correspondence, it is as a reference but never as a direct address to the folksinger (Lomax [in Cohen] 78, 81, 126, 134-135, 347).

Sometimes, Guthrie is aware of Lomax’s sponsoring and takes advantage of it. When Guthrie returned to Los Angeles in the winter of 1941, he convinced his former manager at radio station KFVD to give him an unpaid on-air spot (Cray 204). Guthrie, who imagined the radio a way for him to collect folk songs, clearly influenced by the project with Lomax and the Archive, wanted commercial sponsors for his program (which would give him pay) and asked Lomax for an endorsement on official stationery to “say anything you want to about me that will tell a prospective sponsor just what we done” and serve as “an introduction to sponsors” (Guthrie 1941c qtd. in Cray 204). Lomax obliges with a letter that maintains “[a]ny radio station that puts him on is doing his listener audience and the U.S. a favor” (qtd. in Cray 204). Other times, Lomax writes to others sharing his esteem for Guthrie’s writing potential. For example, Lomax writes to Charles Todd on 17 March 1941 sharing his sense that the folksinger “will make a great book or a great man” and “wish[es] I had time to sit down” with Guthrie and “stir the book in progress,” which was a book idea he insisted Guthrie produce (Lomax [in Cohen] 214). Not only does Lomax help the folk singer network with Manhattan publishers, he also acts on Guthrie’s behalf like suggesting him for the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship to “write books, ballads, songs, and novels that will help people to know each other’s work better,” and Guthrie learned of the deed after he was granted the fellowship in May 1943 (Cray 267).

However, Guthrie is quite a formidable individual and responds to Lomax’s request for material in unanticipated ways to reveal his ability to complement Lomax’s sponsorship. Guthrie’s ability to teach the Texan demands rethinking Brandt’s idea of sponsorship as a “reciprocal relationship” because in imparting his material, Guthrie is also “regulating” what
Lomax so desires; Guthrie acts as a shadow sponsor for Lomax and the Archive by having material that is essential for the primary sponsorship to transpire. Guthrie’s contributions must be read in light of his writing within a larger context concerned with ways of representing American folklife and his words reflect an individual aware of his multiple subject positions and eager to share the stories of a swath of downtrodden Americans feeling forgotten by the mainstream American narrative of industry and success. One of the earliest letters he writes to Lomax, 19 September 1940, is an eight-page, handwritten letter. I will progress through CDA’s three stages of description, interpretation, and explanation to reveal what Guthrie does with this letter. As the fourth letter to Lomax, it is longer than the preceding letters combined, and it is even more personal, which is also suggested by its being completely handwritten. The document seems to conform to conventional standards of a letter—it has a return address, greeting, closing, and signature—but the content is supplied in a style akin to folk song snippets. The mixed textual structures suggest the writer is aware of expectations about the kind of letter-writing he should perform and chooses to defy those expectations. His handwriting tells us this will be an intimate letter and his content confirms this intimacy.

The letter begins with Guthrie telling Lomax he wishes to express “a few more lines tonight on as many different subjects as I can get down… a few thoughts that I been thinking about making up songs and stuff like that” (Guthrie 1940a). “Lines” is an interesting choice of vocabulary and signals Guthrie writes lines for the letter, but also remind us of the lines he writes as a poet and songwriter—whichever way we think of them, “lines” are Guthrie’s domain and the letter takes on an authoritative undertone. Next he mentions a dog being hit by a car outside and how he “could make up a song about how it sounded,” which reminds him of his childhood dog that was “poisend” by “an old neighbor lady with something haywire in her head” (1). This
stream-of-consciousness style highlights that Guthrie controls each turn of the letter’s discourse: notice how he does not refer to any previous conversations with Lomax. Then he says, “[y]ou could write a song about that and it would contain enough of all the high and low feelings to put it over…” (1). The “you” he uses is not directed to Lomax, and again positions Guthrie in control of making the address. Following that, his last line on the first page reads: “[a] folk song ought to be pretty well satisfied just to tell the facts and let it go at that” and seems authoritative (1).

Although it might seem like Guthrie explained the genre and could stop there, he writes seven more pages alternating between stories about his songwriting, performing, folk songs as a genre and their writers/singers, and politicians. He uses the first page as a riff from which he can play off, and he includes commentary on his own political affiliations and discusses letters he sent to a reporter. He finally concludes with a trope where the government is a horse fly “dealing a horse [the people] trouble… [and] its the tail [the folksinger] that swishes and drives the fly off and it sings a little fiddle bow song…” (Guthrie 1940a; 8). The trope invokes a sharply political metaphor that could be overlooked by a reader unaware of the folk tradition’s metaphors: using this trope means Guthrie circumscribes a space within a larger one (like the Archive within the LOC) where access is open but understanding is privileged. Lomax, I am fairly certain, did not ask Guthrie to explain what a folk song was (maybe if he did Guthrie would have introduced the letter as “following up” with the specific request). For Guthrie to write this letter he felt compelled to supply information about the particular genre, which is really an explanation of a particular literacy event, and to instruct Lomax. Though the letter is de-contextualized in the digital collection, I reconstructed the events of late summer/early fall 1940 to hypothesize that Guthrie’s disagreement with radio advertisers in New York over the purpose and texture of folksong compelled him to inform a more sympathetic audience (i.e., Lomax) and, perhaps, get
the last word, as it were, by sending the letter to an Archive acquiring his materials. The invitation to contribute to the Archive endowed Guthrie with a space that valued and validated what he wrote and did: turning to his sponsor and sponsoring institution, Guthrie demonstrates he could function as shadow sponsor and lend resources the sponsors did not expect.

Not only is the status of the letter contested (is it a letter or is it a folk song medley?), it smuggles in bits of the folk tradition to perform where Guthrie cannot. This letter is a sponsor’s tool cataloguing potential literacy events by cataloguing examples of what a folk song is. Earlier in the letter Guthrie explained a folk song should tell the “facts,” but adds, “the last stuff you can sing about is what you saw and if you look hard enough you can see plenty to sing about” and “a folk song is what’s wrong and how to fix it, or it could be whose hungry,” which leads into a definition of folk lore to help the sponsored understand how to participate in the literacy event (Guthrie 1940a; 1, 4, 7-8). Because Guthrie’s letter continuously confuses its reader about what it is and how it is performing, I think Guthrie uses the letter to make a philosophical point about the Archive’s project of collecting and categorizing. The type of “cultural citizenship” Guthrie seeks is similar to that which Young describes Obookiah seeks, and like Obookiah, Guthrie might envision himself as a sponsor by transforming literacy into a “communal act, bringing together a community around a common text and set of beliefs” particularly with his correspondence and generally with his LOC recordings (Young 66, 69). This is how Guthrie sponsors shadows.

Guthrie’s motive—“the reason why you want to write songs is what keeps you going”—is tied to identity and he uses the folk genre to achieve his goal of social activism (Guthrie 1940a; 2; emphasis mine). He writes, “[i]f I thought for two minutes that anything I do or say would hurt America and the people in it I would keep my face shut and catch the first freight out
of the country” (7). Here the expressive modality (“I thought… I would…” and…) and the experiential value explicit in his vocabulary (“catch the first freight”) imbues Guthrie with credibility and authority as an expert resource, also known as a sponsor. “Music is some kind of electricity,” he writes, “that makes a radio out of a man and his dial is in his head and he just sings according to how he's feeling” (4). The metaphor suggests music has the power to inspire social action, and the man Guthrie imagines would identify with the song and do something: he would sing. Listeners would hear the social action and do something: they would transform that action to another action. Singing would be the most obvious, but they could record or transcribe the song or stage a rally to create a community around the literacy event. Participating in the community literacy event bolsters the breadth of citizenship and registers as an affordance of it; where, what, why, when and how one participates (or not) in a literacy event denotes an individual’s status and privileges as a citizen. The ways in which Lomax validates Guthrie as an authentic voice worthy of inclusion in the Archive is similar to how Young explains the work of Obookiah’s “sort of coauthor” Edwin W. Dwight, who probably narrates and validates Obookiah’s story (70). The traditional sponsor tends to endorse the shadow sponsor.

Guthrie’s deviations and modes of address are permissible because of the co-constructed nature of sponsorship. Indeed, Guthrie repeatedly calls attention to the Archive’s project, pokes fun of it, and situates himself as its supplier, as a shadow sponsor—or, a sponsor in the shadow of the primary sponsor (see Guthrie 1941b, for example). The concept of a shadow sponsor diverges most significantly from Brandt’s concept of literacy sponsorship because the shadow sponsor’s behavior does not signal what Brandt identifies as “misappropriation” (Brandt 1998; 179). As a type of subversion, Brandt explains misappropriation as the “potential of the sponsored to divert sponsors’ resources toward ulterior projects, often projects of self-interest or
She acknowledges misappropriation “is always possible at the scene of literacy transmission” and is “a reason for the tight ideological control that usually surrounds reading and writing instruction” (179). Misappropriation represents “diversionary tactics,” yet I find it difficult to support a reading of the correspondence that claims Guthrie acted in “self-interest or self-development” at the expense of, or to the detriment of, his contribution to the Archive and work with Lomax (179). When Guthrie calls the Archive the “skid row section,” he is imagining himself in a community space he knew well from performing in the skid row section of cities like Los Angeles. He believes he belongs in this particular place with a sense of community, even if it is carved out of the larger landscape of the city for the less desirable, down-on-their-luck types. Guthrie’s rhetoric of literacy allowed him to identify with the space of the Archive because he could re-create it and his responsibilities to it in terms he understood and undermine its seriousness. Moreover, Lomax as a sponsor may have invited a shadow sponsor because he did not command the “tight ideological control” Brandt finds essential for a sponsor.

*The Sponsor and Shadow Sponsor Collaborating*

Shadow sponsorship begins off the page. Guthrie first refers to the LOC as the “High Dives” in his letter from 22 January 1941, he uses the same phrase in a letter from ca. April 1941, and the variation “American Highdives” in his letter from 2 February 1941. Unexpectedly, the first use of the phrase “high dives” is found in Lomax’s correspondence. While I can only speculate, it is plausible Lomax appropriated the term after hearing Guthrie use it in a conversation. After conducting a corpus analysis of Lomax’s letters and a scan of the transcript from Lomax’s recording sessions with Guthrie, I cannot find Lomax using this euphemistic expression again—and cannot find where Guthrie used it on record. Substantiating where the
claim originated is not as important as the fact that the Archive’s employee, whom I assume respected the institution for which he worked and his role therein, used this phrase and used it in print—it exists. This strongly suggests that Lomax, writing to Guthrie a few months after their meeting and their late March 1940 recording sessions, wanted to write to Guthrie in a voice or style more akin to his because their personal and professional relationships were still very new. The letter (reproduced below) warrants closer examination:

July 26, 1940

Dear Woodie:

All of your letters are being filed for posterity in the high dives. If you want to swap, I’ll do so, carbons for first copies, which were all a mist anyhow, and I’ll explain when I see you. I’ve heard your records which are really fine. My only regret there is that they didn’t have sense enough to use Pretty Boy Floyd. See you Sunday.

With the best regards that the high dives can afford, I Am sincerely,

Alan (Lomax 1940a)

Oddly enough, this is the lone instance of Lomax misspelling Guthrie’s first name. Whether intentional or not, the misspelling suggests a mimicking of Guthrie’s own lax spelling (see Guthrie’s note below and throughout) because Lomax’s writing to others tends to follow spelling and grammatical conventions; furthermore, we see the power struggle between the two sponsors play out in the greeting. Perhaps Guthrie’s lax spelling explains the misspelling, but Lomax’s educated, white-collar professionalism contributes the letter’s conventional colon following the greeting. The formality implied by the colon is again at odds with the informality of addressing Guthrie by his first name.
To highlight the performative aspect of literacy as it shapes Lomax’s identity, we turn to the body and closing of his letter. Lomax twice refers to the Archive as the “high dives,” perhaps to assert and re-assert his desire to imitate Guthrie’s language and posturing: Lomax rhetorically aligns himself with Guthrie to seem more intimate. Lomax’s use of the verb “to swap” echoes the casual exchanging of songs that Guthrie would have been indeed familiar with and amenable to (to “swap songs” essentially meant musicians would play for each other to share new tunes and revisit old ones). In this move, Lomax does not actually suggest swapping “carbons for first copies,” but constructs a textual structure (“If you want to swap, I’ll do so”) that enables him to initiate the exchange while planting the idea in Guthrie’s head that he has the agency to make the exchange. Then, Lomax undervalues the material by writing they “were all a mist [amiss?] anyhow” to imply the material would be of less value to Guthrie. Lomax further controls the situation by writing he would further “explain” the swap when they meet. After the business of asking-without-asking for Guthrie’s material, Lomax attempts to flatter Guthrie by telling him the records “are really fine” and goes further to show his disappointment as a tried-and-true fan by begrudging that “they,” Guthrie’s record label, RCA, refused to let him record “Pretty Boy Floyd.” Like Guthrie’s own writing, Lomax here does not use quotation marks around the song title, further aligning his text with Guthrie and Guthrie’s style as a writer. Lomax, perhaps overzealous, uses three closings that Fairclough would contend are examples of overwording to impress the letter with experiential value, which “identif[ies] meaning relations in texts and underlying discourse types” and “tr[ies] and specify their ideological bases” (116). Namely, Lomax’s writing tries to simulate their growing relationship and that relationship’s implied social codes and values to propose Lomax’s loyalty to Guthrie while implicitly allowing Lomax to control and shape the relationship in life and in print.
Lomax’s correspondence reveals a man who had to (and knew how to) meet Guthrie on his own terms and write to him in a manner that demonstrated that, although he worked for the United States government, Lomax was authentic and genuinely partial to Guthrie and his work. Where Guthrie “model[s]” a use of language and camaraderie, Lomax adapted and copied it in order for him to gain and maintain Guthrie’s participation. For example, Guthrie sent a note about arriving in “an old gold mining town” in Columbia, California and signed it “[t]ake it easy, Woody” (Guthrie 1941a). Lomax playfully signs his reply, “Give my regards to your family and to California and to those miners who know how to take it easy. Yours, Alan Lomax” (Lomax 1941b). Here Lomax shows concern for Guthrie and the workers; there is a sense that Lomax validates the work Guthrie, the miners, and the state of California represent when he tells Guthrie to share his “regards.” Echoing Guthrie’s oft-used expression of “take it easy,” Lomax links it with “those miners” to indicate that he knows the cultural significance and roots of the expression. Finally, the signature “Yours” is more than a formality. Rather, it suggests Guthrie becomes the (shadow) sponsor with Lomax in the subordinate position; in other words, Lomax linguistically gives up his authority in order to respond to Guthrie’s request to send word, and Lomax writes to Guthrie the way he (Guthrie) writes to him (Lomax). Lomax understood Guthrie wanted a letter that demonstrated he could “read” what California represented in the early 1940s for working-class and poor whites, and Lomax indicates this by mimicking Guthrie’s vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure, as Fairclough distinguishes. Lomax’s adoption is collaborative in that he takes on—through his writing—an aspect of Guthrie’s style and identity to work together, which will have “material and metaphorical” implications for the Archive, meaning Guthrie will still work with Lomax and the LOC to keep the project going and represent class inclusion.
Perhaps the type of sponsor Lomax was requires a complementary sponsor. If it were Lomax’s “interest,” or ideology, to encourage more participation or communication from a contributor to the Archive, he could initiate that kind of relationship. Regardless of why, Lomax welcomed Guthrie’s correspondence; if Lomax were not as welcoming (or tolerant, some might say) of Guthrie and his behavior, the correspondence and sponsorship would be markedly different. In looking at the relational values of words, it is clear that Guthrie’s informality continuously confronts Lomax’s formality and represents a cross-cultural encounter and suggests a potential class struggle. For example, Guthrie writes:

This is just some little recollections about Reno that I’m jotting down here in Columbias new fangled studio building in New York while we’re a putting on a dress rehearsal—we just hearse and hearse… having fun and hearsing around… Back where I come from aint not nobody got time to forecast… (Guthrie 1940b)

Guthrie draws on his social identity (“where I come from”) and his economic identity (“new fangled”), and misuses English grammar and vocabulary to signal this encounter as a struggle for power, according to Fairclough’s questions, as he attempts to assert himself on his own terms. To contrast, Lomax’s formality and rhetorical distance is embodied by parallel structures like “I’d like to… I’d like to…” and using the subjunctive like “I might say that…” (see Lomax 1940b and 1941b, reproduced in Appendix B). This is not reciprocal the way Brandt implies. Sponsors, according to Brandt, “represent the causes into which people’s literacy usually gets recruited” and that “people throughout history have acquired literacy pragmatically under the banner of others’ causes” (1998; 167-168). A reciprocal relationship does not imply a collaborative one, and my understanding of her formulations is that sponsorship does not support a multidirectional use of power and influence: her concept of power is unidirectional. I do not think Brandt’s
“sponsors of literacy” necessarily precludes the idea of a shadow sponsor, and I locate the shadow sponsors potential existence in Brandt’s comment: “[m]ost of the time, however, literacy takes its shape from the interest of its sponsors… obligations towards one’s sponsors run deep, affecting what, why, and how people write and read” (168). Their “obligations” to each other “affect[ed] what, why, and how” they wrote to each other. This bidirectional sense of obligation influencing how they transmitted literacy about poor whites, folk tradition, and federal and professional networks is not typical in traditional understandings of literacy sponsorship.

Guthrie and Lomax sponsor each other. Whereas Guthrie writes in the aforementioned style or, alternatively adopts a declarative tone for answering questions or telling stories, Lomax writes mostly imperatives and poses questions. In response to the deal Guthrie tried to broker, Lomax informs him:

The Music Division hasn’t enough stenographers to typewrite copies of your two books; but if you will donate them, it would be glad to make photostats of all the pages for you. [line break] The photostat paper is nice and stiff. [line break] Send along your MSS., and someday, when you are about ninety, we will put them in a big glass case upstairs, beside the Constitution, with two tall guards to prevent people from stealing them. (Lomax 1942)

The first two sentences in this three-sentence letter tersely deny Guthrie’s request, and the inserted line breaks further add to the authoritative, dismissive tone. The final sentence is an imperative to surrender his songbook in exchange for a glib promise that the work will be protected. The jocular tone belies the specificity of where and under what conditions the item would be displayed; moreover, the hyperbolic suggestions to heavily guard and preserve Guthrie’s books are, at least, an insult to Guthrie, and, at worst, an insult to the Archive’s
purpose. On the other hand, a more favorable reading of Lomax here would suggest he was teasing Guthrie the way he tends to play; this would strengthen Lomax as sponsored whereas the former reading would strengthen him as a sponsor. It is likely a bit of both, which indicates Lomax is sponsoring Guthrie and is sponsored by Guthrie as a shadow sponsor. But, we should remember that Guthrie took his writing seriously and whatever material did not wind up under the typewriter during his marathon composing sessions was material he took care of. Here, Lomax also combines the sponsor’s ability to “regulate” and “recruit” Guthrie as sponsored in his first sentence that joins two independent clauses with a semicolon. The first clause works to “regulate” and the second to “recruit.” Aside from the more complicated grammatical construction, Lomax uses “hasn’t” and the conditional tense (“would be”) to deflect direct disappointment (he hypothetically could have written “couldn’t” or “doesn’t want” or “can’t” or “won’t”) as a statement of the division’s understaffing and adds the conditional in the preceding subordinate clause (“if you will donate”). These textual structures enable Lomax to control the encounter; thus, he effectively performs his role as gatekeeper. Furthermore, Lomax denies Guthrie’s request because of a lack of resources. In the low budget, small-scale operation Lomax manages, Guthrie’s output is not worth additional expense and the status of the objects of literacy mirrors the limited citizenship—Guthrie’s movement and participation restricted by his income, lifestyle, and politics—reflective of their producer.

As another example of Lomax’s sponsorship, he adopts a three-stage approach in his letter from 7 August 1942 before revealing his motive for writing to Guthrie and soliciting permission to use a recording. First, Lomax tries to flatter Guthrie by telling him that he played songs by the Almanac Singers [the group he and Guthrie belonged to with Pete Seeger] for Eleanor Roosevelt and for other bigwigs who were interested in playing his songs on-air. Next,
Lomax implores Guthrie to “hurry up and change your name [the band’s], and for heavens sake make it a good old countrified name like ‘Oklahoma Rangers’” (Lomax 1942). As if to remind Guthrie the auspices under which he is contributing to the LOC, Lomax writes: “your chief point of contact in America is that of the background of the American soil and American folk songs” so “don’t become ‘Headline Singers,’ even though you may be singing the headlines” (Lomax 1942). Finally, he reveals “this all leads up to a request from the Library for the use of one of the songs you recorded for us” (Lomax 1942).16 What’s most interesting about this letter is actually the curious response from Guthrie, which we have to infer from what is available in the digital archive. What we have access to is limited to a permission release from Guthrie dated 9 March 1942—this is a full five months earlier and must be regarding a different use of the song. In other words, Guthrie, the digital collection suggests, neither shows any interest in who was hearing his songs nor has a response to Lomax’s forceful push for a name change (and the reminder of what Guthrie’s music is supposed to be doing and for whom it is directed). Thus, we have to wonder if there is a rhetorical silence from Guthrie. All we know is that later, in a inter-office memo from summer 1942, an employee writes that Guthrie “never answered” a letter that actually granted his request for copies of his notebooks, thereby confirming what the digital collection implied; the employee writes, “Alan says that at the time Woody was slightly annoyed with him about something, and that might have been the reason” (“[Memo, ca. Summer 1942].”). With that in mind, we may conclude that Guthrie was giving the LOC the cold shoulder and invoking his power as a shadow sponsor to leverage how his “recruitment” took shape.

Refiguring Sponsorship and Triangulating the Shadow

The exchange of materials between Guthrie and his sponsors is an important component to consider. Usually, Lomax solicits requests and favors such as asking Guthrie to produce
original works, grant permissions, or travel to D.C. and make recordings. But Guthrie asks for materials, too, and usually they are for copies of the items in their possession that he produced for Lomax and the Archive. Whereas Cushman positions her sponsorship network with Boudinot editing the newspaper between the Cherokee nation and outsiders, I position this network in a triangular arrangement. Guthrie as sponsored responds to Lomax’s requests in material ways (leg one of the triangle, see p. 11); Lomax could keep the material for himself or file it in the Archive (leg two); and Guthrie’s requests for his materials back or switched in the Archive (leg three). This third leg of the triangle also represents how Guthrie’s shadows on/in the material are projected in the Archive. Both Guthrie and the Archive project their roles into the future.

Guthrie cares very much about the shadows he leaves in the Archive; these projections of the self that he wants visitors to find are his agents, standing in for his interests (Brandt and Clinton 350). For example, in Guthrie’s letter from 7 June 1942, in which he proposes to “make a deal with the library to file my original copies of these two books, and make me some typed copies,” he assumes the role of sponsor by the fact that he can “withhold literacy” from the LOC (Guthrie 1942; Brandt 1998; 166). Yet, he quickly undermines his own authority by employing a metaphor linking his identity as a songwriter to poor white migrant workers when he writes these are “songs that I’ve cropped and sharecropped” (Guthrie 1942). Furthermore, after proposing the deal, the textual structures of the following sentences signal his lack of control over the decision: his lack of control indicates he is only the shadow sponsor, a purveyor of resources and not the main sponsor. Guthrie’s grammatical and linguistic deficiencies write him subject to the Archive’s decision by assuming his role as socio-economic inferior. He admits: “I could sleep better, eat better, sing louder, and run faster, if I knew these songbooks was stuck in a pigoon hole down there [in the LOC], and I had good neat typed copies of them” (Guthrie 1942).
Not only does Guthrie care what happens to his writing and his rhetorical identity, now he links his writing and its safekeeping to material consequences. Paul Prior, drawing from Brandt’s idea of “literacy as involvement,” reminds us that literacy is a “fundamentally live, situated activity in a social scene,” and if we work backwards from Guthrie’s writing, we would find a writer attempting to “navigate” how his material will be handled in the future (171, 173). Guthrie believes he could live better and perform better if his writing was valued by the Archive as much as he valued it. His embodiment is a sign of involvement in shaping a community that will form around his writing, and it marks his participation as citizen sharing his identity and values when the outside elite may otherwise neglect it. Guthrie thinks his writing and its safekeeping are worth preserving where and how he wants; the material and its treatment becomes a surrogate to mark the limitations he felt in a particular society. All along, Guthrie anticipates and manipulates how visitors will read his writing and become invested in his story (Donehower 100). The shadows Guthrie sponsors tell us so.

While Lomax, as a sponsor, “embod[ies] the resource management systems of literacy, particularly avenues to access and reward,” he was not the only resource manager (Brandt 2001; 27). It is also worth pointing out that the relationship between Guthrie and Lomax traded on cultural capital, whereas Brandt focuses on the economic gain afforded by sponsorship. I think this is, on the one hand, a key moment for reflection: Brandt’s study examines literacy over time, but it is rooted in the post-WWII era and looks forward. She defines earlier sponsorship relationships focused on the “moral imperative,” and what makes the relationship between Guthrie and Lomax unique is that it occurs on the cusp before Brandt’s timeframe. Brandt was drawn to the idea of “sponsorship” because the twentieth century “turned the abilities to read and write into widely exploitable resources, commercial sponsorship abounded” (20). Guthrie, as a
radio performer and personality, was keenly aware of the dynamics of corporate, commercial sponsors; but his awareness of what they wanted him to do on their programs did not always work out and so, in both literacy sponsorship and commercial sponsorship, Guthrie was an enigma. Guthrie eventually severed his contract with the Model Tobacco Company, because he did not like the musical sound the producers wanted for the show he was asked to host, *Pipe Smoking Time* (see his 19 September 1940 letter quoted earlier). Meanwhile, Guthrie’s disbelief about the amount of money he was making mentioned in early letters to Lomax (see Guthrie’s letters from 17 and 19 September 1940) suggest Guthrie cared about both the cultural impact of his literacy and its economic value.

By tracing the complicated (and overlapping) network of sponsorship/ shadow sponsorship, I insist we consider sponsorship less stable than previous scholars have extrapolated. I am arguing that people play different roles, sometimes simultaneously, in sponsorship and thus sometimes act as shadow sponsors. If the roles are destabilized or dynamic, it means the participants can share their resources to co-create a relationship that benefits them and acknowledges their role and agency. I am also arguing that material objects play different roles, sometimes simultaneously, in sponsorship and thus sometimes act as shadow sponsors, too. Sponsorship between Guthrie and Lomax reveals both parties can leverage the purpose for which a sponsor “recruited” the sponsored; however, the ability to leverage does not necessarily equalize the relationship. Even though the relationship is not equal, we cannot assume that sponsors are wealthier, smarter, more influential than those sponsored; we cannot assume that the sponsors are the only ones who “lend their resources or credibility” and “stand to gain benefits from their success” (Brandt 1998; 167). None of those assumptions are true when it comes to the sponsorship between Guthrie and Lomax. It might appear that Lomax, with his
office job and seemingly privileged background would be wealthier and have more expertise than Guthrie; however, for some time, Guthrie made significantly more money than Lomax and was actually born into a well-to-do family before tragedy whisked away the fortune Charley Guthrie lavished on his family, including a young Woody. Both Lomax and Guthrie are knowledgeable and both share their resources, which is similar to how Lyons-Robinson describes her membership in a women’s organization.

Goldblatt and Jolliffe warn about taking Brandt’s idea of the sponsor’s success or reward too literally, and they are right because sponsorship is more than gaining influence, power or another “advantage” (127). Sponsors put much on the line in these relationships: they “take risks” and “can be harmed, altered, or even transformed” by those they intend to sponsor (Goldblatt and Jolliffe 127). Both Guthrie and Lomax (and the Archive) have much to gain from the relationships between each other. For all of Guthrie’s jibes and gripes about the Archive’s project and resources, he was inspired to take up the Archive’s mission and asked Lomax to vouch for his folk song collection project in Southern California. By sharing his resources (time, skills, knowledge, letters) with Lomax and the Archive, Guthrie was changed and this change proves the shadow sponsor can be empowered to take action he previously had not considered. Shadow sponsorship helps bring to light the admission that the sponsored might have to do the same kind of taking up the sponsor does to share power (Goldblatt and Jolliffe 131). Although Goldblatt and Jolliffe explain the compromise of power between institutions and community partners, this compromise of power can be collaborative (131). If sponsorship is a one more dynamic relationship, there is need for collaboration, which implies the shadow sponsor is already present and waiting to be operationalized from within.
When the roles of sponsorship are allowed (or pressured) to fluctuate, individuals perform alternating roles. Sometimes Lomax sponsors Guthrie, and sometimes Guthrie sponsors Lomax in unsolicited ways—this is Guthrie complementing Lomax’s sponsorship with shadow sponsorship. Whereas Moss and Lyons-Robinson describe the “shared” nature of sponsorship, consider the sponsor a more fluid position, and encourage “more closely examin[ing] the reciprocal relationships,” I do not understand their claims to support sponsorship as collaborative instead of reciprocal (153). In making this observation, I create a space to recognize the shadow sponsor and acknowledge the sometimes simultaneous exchange between individuals as sponsor-to-shadow sponsor/sponsored and sponsor/sponsored-to-shadow sponsor. Although Lyons-Robinson calls herself a “‘literacy go-between,’” I am resistant to this formulation because it suggests she occupies a position betwixt two others as a functionary (143). Guthrie, as I understand his contributions to the Archive through his correspondence, would loathe to be labeled a “go-between,” and it undervalues his performance and contributions.

**CONCLUSION: THE ARCHIVE’S ILLUMINATING SHADOW**

Here I treat archival events more as moments that disrupt (if only provisionally) a field of force, that challenge (if only slightly) what can be said and done, that question (if only quietly) “epistemic warrant,” that realign the certainties of the probable more than they mark wholesale reversals of direction.

—Ann Laura Stoler (51)

As a shadow sponsor, Guthrie performs two roles: he sponsors shadows, that is, he leaves shadows or traces of his presence in the Archive, and he complements the other sponsor, whether it is Lomax or the Archive. Both roles enable a projection of Guthrie’s sponsorship through the veil of the Archive to its visitors. The projection and traces on the material objects convey his performance as a shadow sponsor signal “mobility across distance.” They also signal disruptions
that “realign” potentials and power distributions, as the epigram from Stoler’s research states (51). Stoler’s parenthetical comments resonate with the location and performance of the shadow sponsor: the parentheticals are already there within the body text and they highlight the shadow sponsor’s disruptive presence, recognized by sometimes tentative, minor, and suggestive moves. The shadow sponsor does not, like Stoler’s own evidentiary moments in the Dutch colonial archive, radically challenge our ways of knowing, but the shadow sponsor does not have to be a radical agent. Guthrie’s shadows and his shadow sponsorship placement in the Archive and available for its visitors invite a shift away from the traditional understanding of literacy sponsorship towards a more complex network of obligation, support, restriction, and collaboration.

According to Antoinette Burton, archives are sites not “innocent of struggles for power in either their creation or their interpretive applications,” and she advocates to “denaturalize” any notion that the archive’s ideological affiliations are contained in its physical space (6). We know the archive is made of choices about what does in (and what stays out) and a product of people, pressures, and situations, but those choices are not my primary concern (Burton 6). It is important to denaturalize—or sensitize—our ways of looking to seek the shadow archive and ask: how does the notion of shadow help us think about the archive? Looking for the shadow archive (the complement to the archive as sponsor) acknowledges what we see on-line and find in the reading room are not all that happen in the archive. We can respond to Burton’s call to “denaturalize” the archive’s boundaries in spatial terms, but instead of looking further afield to challenge the boundaries of the archive and its ideological infrastructure, the concept of the shadow sponsor demands we look deeper within because the shadow is operational within.
To add to this move to denaturalize, we need to decentralize the “archive as the ‘arbiter of truth’” and one way to do that is to highlight its materiality—that is, how it is the product and producer of shaping relationships (Burton 9). When we read the material for the shadows, we can see the Archive’s sponsorship takes two tacks. The first tack supports the Archive as a traditional sponsor and accepting the LOC’s description about its collection (see “Context” section) substantiates this role. The second tack supports the Archive as a shadow sponsor: it already has the resources, material and immaterial, to support an alternate reading of the power relationships within. This tack supports the shadow archive by also recognizing those others who worked in the shadows to catalogue, preserve, scan, and publish, and acknowledging their role shaping and enabling our access to the resources. This Archive has the power to restrict and regulate, like Brandt writes about the sponsor, but this Archive is also a shadow sponsor in that it already exposes shadows.

Guthrie performed multiple roles when he was involved with the Archive, and we should not be surprised to find the Archive performs multiple roles itself. We find traces of the Archive’s strained roles in its description of the collection. Sometimes Guthrie is referred to by his first name, and other times by his last name. The mixed use of informal and formal address is more than a stylistic oversight: it speaks to the double-nature of the Archive’s relationship with Guthrie—and I mean that to include the Archive as a place with a mission and the persons working in service to that mission. As I read this Archive’s collection looking to substantiate its description, I encountered more traces of the Archive’s strained roles. The description wants to present an alternative version of Guthrie as someone spruced up and mingling with New York City’s intellectuals and artists and it assumes the visitor arrives with a preconceived notion of Guthrie’s “usual image” (“About the Collection.”). But I found Guthrie’s colloquialisms, stories
about rambling around, and tales of his drinking and hustling in the collection, which seem to
play up the mythologized image of Guthrie. While I cannot argue with the description that
Guthrie’s writing can be “humorous” and “serious,” I am at a loss for how a visitor would find
indication that the LOC staff was “charmed” by Guthrie (“About the Collection.”). It matters less
which Guthrie is presented than it does acknowledging what is happening in this space: the
Archive wants to “regulate” a reading—a traditional sponsorship—through its materials and
simultaneously “grants” a reading—a shadow sponsorship—through the same material (Brandt
1998; 166). The Archive as both sponsor and shadow sponsor better situates and more accurately
describes how sponsorship can be collaborative. Archival studies become more generative by
imploring we look for both sponsors and read their roles together to attain a more complicated
and realistic understanding of sponsorship.

Shadowing (the verb form of what the shadow sponsor does) in this Archive is not the
same as archival invisibility. The “hidden” archive is usually the term applied to material the
archive has yet to catalogue and sometimes unavailable to visitors. A researcher in rhetoric and
composition should consider how the archivist’s “invisible hands” might have handled the
documents and realize there is nothing obvious about the organization or assumptions taken for
granted by the archivist, but invisibility is not the same as shadow sponsorship (Morris and Rose
52). Invisibility and the hidden are present, but shadowing is performed. Shadow sponsorship
finds its way onto documents as the small clues indicating another person’s now-vanished
presence: the archivist’s (or archivists’) pencil marks on various manuscripts shadow the
Archive’s sponsorship. The Archive has a stated mission that we may understand as its
sponsorship intension, but when we encounter certain clues on the material, we are alerted to the
multiple layers of sponsorship and shadow sponsorship. Some notations on archival material are
standard practice to maintain order and trace to the archivist’s role supporting the Archive as sponsor but this Archive has another kind of note (Morris and Rose 59). An archivist, presumably, has used red colored pencil to write “Woody” on some pages (see Guthrie 1940, for example). It is confusing because sometimes Guthrie would type letters and then sign his name or, in a handwritten letter, sign his name multiple times. These notes commanding “FILE” or declaring “WOODY” are not always in Lomax’s hand, and regardless of whose notes they are, we should notice all the unnamed and shadowy traces of those who helped shape and preserve how we come to view the collection (see also Guthrie 1941a). It is also worth mentioning that shadowing is not ghostwriting either, which is about the hidden or secretive author behind the acknowledged author (see Brandt 2007). Shadowing requires daylight: the shadow is in plain sight and it signals something obscured, but nonetheless present and performing.

Perhaps the greatest change in literacy learning since Brandt asked her subjects to recall their literacy learning experiences in the twentieth century is the distributed nature of literacy learning and its sponsors. My research confirms her claim “literacy is being sponsored in much different ways than it was” and sponsors are “more prolific, diffused, and heterogenous [sic]” (Brandt 2001; 197). It is not lost on me that the Archive seems to naturalize the irreverent and subversive messages in Guthrie’s correspondence: that would be expected given how Brandt explains literacy is controlled by the sponsor, in this case the Archive. Yet, we find those messages by looking for the shadow archive and connecting to Guthrie’s projected shadow sponsorship. In a way, the shadow sponsor, shadows, and shadowing populate a kind of black market to complement Brandt’s economy rhetoric. Both markets exist, sometimes challenging the other, but certainly interanimating, and they bring new meaning to Brandt’s discussion of literacy at work in differential economies (172). How individuals gain and grant access to
literacy, the amount of power a sponsor wields, and the valuation of that literacy is necessarily different as individuals move through economic zones (172). Brandt is right to point to “changing networks” as they fluctuate under economic pressures to rationalize the changes to literacy learning (193). With Guthrie, the economy he operated in was one marked by transient, sometimes illegal, labor and typically low skill and low-wage. It might not produce centralized authoritative sponsors, but it does produce secondary, or shadow sponsors, who shape themselves fit for a task or relationship, and rhetorically imagine roles and identities. Guthrie traded in a networked economy of laborers, performers, intellectuals, and radicals, and his shadow sponsorship indicates his relationships with Lomax and the Archive were similarly interactive and supported distributed power arrangements to collaboratively make meaningful (and shadow) exchanges.

If we are sensitized to look for a more complicated network of participants, sponsorship becomes a more dynamic concept. I do not think we can afford to not think of sponsorship as a collaborative relationship, and collaboration extends to the work we do with (and through) archival studies. In pursuing my research questions to trace shadow sponsorship, I am involved and sponsored by these shadows. The archive as a “scene” of where the story unfolds is important in that it shapes how we understand and share it (Halbritter and Linquist 173). It matters that the correspondence is in an Archive and shared in a digital collection: as I conducted this research, I, too, learned how to make use of what I was finding, as Halbritter and Linquist suggest by “operationalizing the discovery of forms and meanings of literacy sponsorship” (173). Mine is an “embodied research response” like the one Jessica Enoch and Jean Bessette (2013) describe as they discuss traditional archival studies, and my work suggests how I plan to continue thinking about research in, through, and about the digital archive in a similar way (639-
I agree with Enoch and Bessette that all too often digital research seems disembodied, but if shadow sponsorship teaches us anything, it teaches us that these shadows are very much embodied: they are performing. More than that, they invite readers to participate in making meaning around their materiality and the digital archive facilitates a “virtual proximity.” This suggests further theorizing about how the concept of the shadow helps us make archival and digital archival studies immersive and participatory.

Another learning opportunity for me was to challenge what I thought about creating and maintaining an archive by creating a digital collection of the LOC’s material. This was a two-step project that involved creating my own annotations and classifications of the material and developing them into a web exhibit. The project evolved into a mapped exhibit tracing Guthrie’s travels and his correspondence to Lomax. Incorporating a digital project into my work points to conversations about digital archival studies and digital humanities that I hope to engage with in the near-term. My on-going research questions are in service to concerns of how one might call attention to the “rhetorical significance of populations often silenced by dominant historical narratives,” and conduct “digital scholarship in ways that engage with historical actors and present-day stakeholder communities on their own terms” (Enoch and Gold 108). Using the digital archive as a site to ask how literacy sponsorship and shadow sponsorship play a role in challenging long-standing notions about the archive as “hermetically sealed, contained, and unchanging” seems like a particularly interesting line of inquiry to further explore (Cushman 2013; 117). My questions about the relationships shaping the archive are, in part, in service of disrupting the preservation ethos that Cushman also challenges (117). The Archive of American Folk Song could change how visitors make meaning with its digital collection if visitors could “actively take up the knowledge, to continue the telling of it, and to position themselves in
relationship to the era, the place” (129). Visitors could have the tools and sensitization to
empower their use of the material to riff off and re-work it into a new imagining, similar to how
talks and memory to riff off and re-work existing material into a
new performance (129; Parente 166).

I wanted my research to respond to Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch’s (2010)
endorsement to “broaden the scope of historiographic methods by identifying new places to look,
new questions to ask, and new issues to consider” (13). While I kept my research focused on
scenes of literacy, I turned to a writer and research site lacking the field’s attention. I also wanted
to answer a concern voiced that “white working-class artists have no dedicated constituency in
the academy” and Guthrie proved to be the sponsor I needed (Shumway qtd. in Cassuto). Since I
had not encountered much work on literacy sponsorship utilizing archival sources, I confronted
challenges in my findings and in explaining them, as Glenn and Enoch speculate about changing
in research sites (18). The theoretical construct which I wanted to explain enabled me to enact a
“cross-boundary exchange… talk[ing] with and listen[ing] to Others” and my conservationists
happened to speak through the Archive and helped me realize shadow sponsorship has material
and immaterial aspects (24). To respond, I focused on the sponsorship relationship as a
triangulation between Guthrie, Lomax, and the Archive and shared textual moments in which
Guthrie supports and subverts the role of sponsored to develop the concept of the “shadow
sponsor.” To make my claim, I explained the move to a collaborative sponsorship that enables
the shadow sponsor and how the shadow is operational within sponsorship and sponsoring
institutions. My response is, according to historian Jill Lepore’s (2001) proposition, a
microhistory. A microhistory works under the auspices that the academic value of a subject’s life
is less about its “uniqueness” and more about its “exemplariness” and how that life can inform
our understanding of larger socio-cultural issues (133). Lepore’s “hunch” to look at her research subject “as faintly exotic but somehow emblematic” resonated with how and why I wanted to investigate the correspondence collection and Guthrie (142). By her esteem, my work is a microhistory that transforms the story about a person’s life into one explaining how the performance of a particular type of sponsorship could reconfigure the concept for us (133).

I have been thinking about the letters tucked into plastic sleeves and collected in folders boxed away in the basement of the LOC, and the ones punctually displaying themselves on the computer screen. They signal someone(s) not there—Guthrie and Lomax, of course—but also the archivists and staff that helped scan the items, process, etc., all of these and the letters, they cast a light and a shadow. The light shines on what is present and what is pixelated. The shadow rests on everything else—not just material because we get a hint of that by examining the representations of the paper pages—but it is a shadow that illuminates by calling attention to the questions obscured, like: How did these get here? Why? Who put them here? For who and what purpose? That light is not necessarily a clear white light either, and as I think about the types of literacy sponsorship relationships centered on this archival site, it is shadowy.

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1 Founded in 1928, the Archive of American Folk Song was renamed the Archive of Folk Culture when it was acquired by the American Folklife Center in 1978 (“Collections & Research Services: The Archive of Folk Culture.”). I have chosen to refer to the Archive by its former name and this should not be considered an error. Additionally, this note serves to explain why the Archive’s name in the paper differs from my references, which adhere to the Archive’s preferred citation.

2 It is worth noting that the correspondence is the output of two sometimes Socialist and sometimes Communist sympathizers—sometimes allegedly and sometimes verifiably—and has been neutralized of its and its writers’ political leanings by inclusion into this institutional space; I think this is a point a reading of Brandt supports.

3 “More than three hundred pages of song lyrics comprise some seven self-published or unpublished songbooks in the original collection,” according to the LOC. The Guthrie family controls copyrights to Woody Guthrie’s artistic output and the songs are not included online as per the family’s wishes. To gain access researchers must file a request with the LOC. See “About the Collection.”
When I asked Todd Harvey about the digital collection’s description and what material would support employees being “charmed” or “impressed,” he said he wasn’t sure who wrote it but that it was probably their interpretation (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

Fairclough writes, “this is true whether one is talking at the level of the particular situation, or in terms of a social institution, or in terms of a whole society: power at all these levels is won, exercised, sustained, and lost in the course of social struggle” (68).

Fairclough describes “contents” as a constraint “on what is said or done; “relations” as a constraint on “the social relations people enter into in discourse; and “subjects” or the ‘subject positions’” as a constraint of the role(s) “people can occupy” (48; emphasis in original).

As another example of the LOC’s sometimes questionable archival processing, this letter is incorrectly dated. Although its title attributes it being written in 1942, the actual scanned letter and its transcription is dated 17 September 1940. I believe there may be additional errors and inconsistencies in the archival material presented online (see note 14), but for the scope of this thesis, I will not go too in-depth with this matter. However, the mistake acts as a manifestation of sponsorship as the later date implies Guthrie may have established a level of familiarity that would lead a reader to assume he is joking with Lomax; the correct date reveals Guthrie’s irreverence for the LOC from the beginning.

I realize using the word “traditional” throughout this piece for lack of a better word and concede that it is a bit strange given that literacy sponsorship is not that “old” of a concept. I use “traditional” to refer to a strict interpretation of Brandt’s concept of literacy sponsorship as a pivot around which to make comparisons.

Guthrie was well aware that Lomax was saving their correspondence “for prosperity” in the “high dives” (Lomax 1940a).

Guthrie on folklore: “folks made it up because they seen that the politicians couldnt find nothing to fix or nobody to feed or five a job of work”) to help the sponsored understand how to participate in the literacy event (Guthrie 1940a; 7-8).

Bill Nowlin writes that Guthrie “had an appreciation for the limited resources Alan Lomax had at his disposal” and suggests that Guthrie calling the Archives “the skid row section” is because of its lack of funding (37). While I don’t doubt the Archive had limited funding, Guthrie choose to use this particular term for a reason and I argue he imagined himself in the community of the Archive just as he could saunter down skid row with his guitar.

In my word search, I searched “dives,” “skid,” and “high,” but none of the results indicated Lomax using the term elsewhere and Guthrie using it before Lomax did in his 2 February 1941 correspondence.

Guthrie actually also misspells Lomax’s first name one time in a letter from early 1941. The LOC dates this letter as “ca. January 1941,” but the reconstruction I did with the Archive’s materials to create my digital project helped me more accurately date it to 16-21 January 1941. When it comes to correspondence, the dates matter, and I think this is an example of how the LOC could present a better—more accurate—collection. This is also an example of how a crowd-sourced or participatory archive could allow visitors to help shape the archive, instead of relying on the archive’s limited resources to execute meticulous work.

Lomax graduated from Choate Rosemary Hall, received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas-Austin, after completing a few semesters at Harvard, and corresponded with faculty at both Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania. His father, John A. Lomax, was a Harvard man and honorary curator at the Archive of American Folk Song from 1934 to his death.
in 1948. However, Alan was a scholarship student and John Lomax’s finances were devastated by faltering bond prices by 1931, which eventually spurred him to take Alan with him and start collecting folk songs. (see Szwed pgs. 18-39)

Lomax’s note takes on both a mocking nature and a depressing tone when encountered in the archive considering Guthrie’s life was taken by Huntington’s Disease well before he could be ninety-years-old. Guthrie died in 1967 at the age of fifty-five.

Why the LOC needs permission of the recording already in its possession is somewhat curious to me, although I would understand if the LOC wanted to avoid releasing a recording that would conflict with any commercial recording sales. There is evidence of conversations with and about Guthrie’s commercial recordings and his LOC recordings. Still, one could argue the permission request is a formality.
APPENDIX A

Fairclough’s ten questions to ask of a text when conducting a CDA are as follows:

A. Vocabulary
1. What *experiential* values do words have?
   - What classification schemes are drawn upon?
   - Are there words which are ideologically contested?
   - Is there *rewording* or *overwording*?
   - What ideologically significant meaning relations (*synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy*) are there between words?
2. What *relational* values do words have?
   - Are there euphemistic expressions?
   - Are there markedly formal or informal words?
3. What *expressive* values do words have?
4. What metaphors are used?

B. Grammar
5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?
   - What types of *process* and *participant* predominate?
   - Is agency unclear?
   - Are processes what they seem?
   - Are *nominalizations* used?
   - Are sentences active or passive?
   - Are sentences positive or negative?
6. What relational values do grammatical features have?
   - What *modes* (*declarative, grammatical question, imperative*) are used?
   - Are there important features of *relational modality*?
   - Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used, and if so, how?
7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
   - Are there important features of *expressive modality*?
8. How are (simple) sentences linked together?
   - What logical connectors are used?
   - Are complex sentences characterized by *coordination* or *subordination*?
   - What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

C. Textual structures
9. What interactional conventions are used?
   - Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
10. What larger-scale structures does the text have?
APPENDIX B

Guthrie’s correspondence to Lomax totals 10,470 words and 2,105 unique words (according to Voyant Tools). With the stop words list enabled (removing words like “the” and “and”), and below is a word cloud of the most frequent words:

<image>

permalink: http://voyant-tools.org/tool/Cirrus/?corpus=1421276264195.7729&stopList=stop.en.taporware.txt&docIndex=0&docId=d1421212036080.5cc8250c-20f8-2783-4c05-26e845d90e6

Lomax’s correspondence to Guthrie totals 1,984 words and 705 unique words, and below is a word cloud of the most frequent words:

<image>

permalink: http://voyant-tools.org/tool/Cirrus/?corpus=1421271680120.1692&stopList=stop.en.taporware.txt&docIndex=0&docId=d1421212036080.e9d1aaf5-9be8-5d10-9e06-f77daf42414a
APPENDIX C

The “[Letter from Alan Lomax to Woody Guthrie, November 1, 1940],” referred to as “Lomax 1940b” is reproduced below:

November 1, 1940

Dear Woody:

I am indeed sorry that you’re no longer on Back Where I Come From. I wish there was some way that you and Nick could get together again. The first program what you failed to appear on just about broke my heart and I don’t know yet how I’m going to plan the scripts without imagining you taking lines. I’d like to hear your side of the story and I’d like to try to do something about the situation.

A friend of mine is helping to put on National Art Week. He heard about your ballad on Tom Joad and thought it would be a good idea for you to write a song or ballad about National Art Week. This project which you will find out more about in the pamphlet, gives opportunity to artists in the country to exhibit and sell their work and is aimed at making it easy for more artists to make a living in the United States. I thought this idea of finding the hidden talent in America might be right for you. The song doesn't have to be about artists, specifically, but just about the hidden, unknown, and undiscovered fine people that there are in this country. I wrote MacMillan Publishers the other day and suggested that they look at your autobiography. How is it coming along? How are you coming along?

If you’d like to get away from New York for a couple of weeks, why not drop down to see us. We'd be delighted to see you and to have you.

With my very best regards,

Alan

The “[Letter from Alan Lomax to Woody Guthrie, December 13, 1941],” referred to as “Lomax 1941b” is reproduced below:

December 13, 1941

Mr. Woody Guthrie
130 West 10 Street
New York City

Dear Woody:

I have gotten in touch with the people at the Department of Interior and I think they may decide to pay for the making of a fifteen-minute transcription of your songs about the Bonneville Dam. There will be a fee in it for you, of course. I will let you know when anything develops.
I certainly do appreciate your list of informants in West Texas. I’ve forwarded it on to Father, and I am sure the results will be good. See if you can make these studio people cut their cost for your Pearl Harbor records, since we have practically no money for this project of documenting wartime opinion. I might say that the stuff so far has been very exciting.

Nick always looks happier outside of New York. I will send his address later. Please hurry the record along, since we will be doing our show over the week end.

Thanks for everything,

Alan

ALjs
REFERENCES


Harvey, Todd. “Re: Information about the Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection.” Message to the author. 15 Sep. 2014. E-mail.


