(UN)ARCHIVING: OPENNESS, DIVERSITY, SHARING • A LEXICON

About

The archive plays a key role in the construction of collective memory by preserving certain views of history and amplifying certain cultural discourses. As such, it is a device of power and of inevitable exclusion. According to Paul Soulellis, this implies that we “carefully examine our archives and search for lost voices, stories of failure, non-linear trajectories, and other non-conventional perspectives.” [1]

The digitalization of the archive has gradually contributed to its democratization as enhanced by online accessibility and the possibility of shared construction. Mechanisms for accessing, managing, and sharing content, as well as distributed storage, contribute to constructing the archive as the result of a collective and inclusive process. The archive repositions itself, moving away from a centralized structure towards an open, decentralized, and participative structure, permeable to diversity and representativeness.

Building on this idea, ***(Un)archiving*** explores how the digital archive can become a means of resistance that, in the words of Abigail De Kosnik, acts as a “supportive infrastructure for groups whose histories and cultures are constantly in danger of being overwritten, forgotten, deleted, or relegated to dark corners by the guardians of ‘official’ history and culture.” [2]

The project is presented in two complementary formats: this printed volume and a webpage, which is the core project output. The webpage addresses this topic through the collection and networked visualization of concepts and characteristics that enable a digital, collaborative, and inclusive archive. With this form of content visualization and exploration, it aims to create

a space for reflection on the archive, its limitations and potential, highlighting the role it can play as a device of resistance. You can find a QR code to access the webpage at the end of this book.

Complementing the website, the printed booklet presents a lexicon that brings together quotations and excerpts from the original sources used on the website, contextualizing the concepts within their original debates.

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[1] Soulellis, P. (2019, January 25) **QUEER.ARCHIVE.WORK 2, 1923 INTERNET ARCHIVE EDITION,** [Web log post] Retrieved from https://blog.archive.org/2019/01/25/queer-archive-work--2-1923-internet-archive-edition/

[2] De Kosnik, A. (2016).**Rogue archives: digital cultural memory and media fandom.** (p.135).The MIT Press.

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ARCHIVE

→ From Lison A., Mars, M., Medak, T., & Prelinger, R. (2019). ***Archives.*** Meson Press & University of Minnesota Press.

Fever and Fervor

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF INCONVENIENCE*, BY RICK PRELINGER.

[...] Archive fever is not the same as archival fervor.

Archives today are the center of much attention but few agendas. Archivists, users and theorists of archives, artists and scholars say much about the record and its keeping, but their voices rarely reach the public or leak across disciplinary boundaries. Even if these conversations were to coalesce, it is unlikely that the speakers would share a common conceptual or discursive toolbox. And if it were not for those working archivists who demand respect as both thinkers and practitioners, the intensity of contemporary interest in archives would be unmatched by any commitment to intervene in archival futures. We have reached a swirling stasis, where archives are active objects of contemplation and contestation, but largely left to themselves to craft their future shape and negotiate with those whose futures will be shaped by their recordkeeping efforts.

To argue that archives can inform the redistribution of power and resources, to advocate that archival theory and practice must converge, to insist on the recognition of archives as material places of gendered, racialized labor and poorly examined workflows, and to engage in actionable as well as notional archival critique—these are all assertions that we owe to thoughtful archivists more than to artists and scholars. We ask more from theories of knowledge than from the institutions where knowledge resides, and while we fetishize books and libraries, we all too often take for granted archives and the raw records they hold. Yet for reasons we should already know and others we have yet to learn, archives need our active support and continuing engagement. We therefore need to dive below a surface of platitudes and case-study narratives that elevate anecdote over argument, and plot a course, no matter how jagged, for memory institutions in an age of precarities and rising waters, whether it be to negotiate uncertain alliances or pursue fragile autonomies. And, even as it may sometimes feel paradoxical, we need to find ways to break through the strictures that bind archives and enclose their contents while simultaneously celebrating the affordances of inconvenience.

Occasions for Excitement

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF INCONVENIENCE*, BY RICK PRELINGER.

The recent history of archives is replete with inspiring stories of emergence and visibility, but it's also a tale of neglect, of utopian cards unplayed, of disrespect for archival labor, and of theories often too diffuse to be actionable. The gap between actual and potential may help explain why anxiety has become the default mindset in the archival world. Despite these conditions, I'm optimistic about the possibilities that archives afford, not only as bridges between remembrance and action but as arenas of encounter and mobilization.

Of all archival affordances we might imagine, historical intervention is perhaps the most exciting: in simplest terms, deploying records of the past in the present so as to influence possible futures. And while power accommodates resistance in symbolic spaces because it is easier to assimilate than resistance in the streets, the record itself is well suited to enable the most pointed and potent of rebukes. And as I will discuss later, evidence offers venues for uneffaced differences to play, opportunities for contestation and critique, and the wherewithal for rendering the excesses of narrativization obsolete.

My intervention—which I explicitly characterize as meditation modulated by provocation—seeks to position archives as places of possibility, as places where we might seek to perform struggle, expose presentism, make theories actionable, refuse dominant narratives of inevitability, and imagine and stage a broad spectrum of futures.[2] In a time when prolepsis and analepsis cycle rapidly, when boundaries between past/present/future

2. Bethany Nowviskie (2016a and b) calls for the reformulation of digital collections and digital scholarship "to fuel the conceptualization and the realization of alternative futures," invoking Afrofuturist thought and the fusion of community archival practice with speculative thinking, as exemplified in the work of Rasheedah Phillips's Community Futures Lab. (https://www.blackquantumfuturism.com/, accessed April 15, 2017.).

manifest as blurred and even invisible, repositories of records are at once anchorages and launchpads and spaces for retrospect and rehearsal.

They are the waysides where media temporarily reposes before it is reborn. And today archives are more than reflectors of extrinsic activity: they have also become laboratories where key social and cultural discourses are proposed, argued, and tested. I therefore hope that through more conscious and less isolated archival practices we may better combat the divide between theory and practice and the power relations this divide reinforces.

I complete this text in the hot and fiery summer of 2018, unable to know whether archives will survive their current caretakers or whether our successors (or even ourselves) will watch the record-trail of our species fade away. The futures we theorize cannot be based simply on flows of money and power but must also take into account both species fragility and environmental precarity. If archives are to ride the rising waves, it won't be as arks fully caulked to repel leaks but as permeable wetlands capable of assimilating ebbs and flows— venues where past, present, and future interchange and transform one another. In this lies their greatest purpose and occasion for excitement.[3]

[...]

3. Jarrett M. Drake (2016a and b) critiques "the traditional way of doing archives,"outlines the risks of reformism and describes "the transformative power of liberatory and community archives" in an essential, two-part article.

Overtheorized and Underfunded

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF INCONVENIENCE*, BY RICK PRELINGER.

[...] Archivists are confounded by the imprecision that exists between “archives,” which most archivists define as places of collecting, preservation, access, and archival labor, and “the archive,” which I will propose as an umbrella term for conceptual, philosophical, artistic, literary, historical, or analytical constructs centered around archives and/or archival process. I don’t consider the two terms interchangeable. Most writers and artists have gravitated to the term “archive.” Some also use “the archive” and “the archives” interchangeably without interrogating possible differences. But the fuzziness surrounding “the archives” and “the archive” vexes archivists, who rightfully cringe when the specificity of their workplaces— which are places of labor, not conceptual formulations—is simultaneously invoked and ignored. An unstable amalgam of the unconscious and quotidian, “the archive” has become an undemanding construct, deployed by the critical disciplines as they interact with history and memory, invoked time and again without necessarily requiring sharp definition, similar perhaps to a screen onto which traces of theory flash for long moments before fading.

“The archive” invites flirtation; the “archives,” on the other hand, could not be more demanding. Though their workplaces may seem quiet and their workflows pretend to appear apolitical, archives overflow with contention. To collect is to commit to the survival of certain records over others; to arrange and describe is often to enclose; to preserve is to resist power, violence, and constraint; to proffer access can be to invite misunderstanding and aggression. And yet archives yearn for praxis; even routine archival labor is practice in search of theory. But to how many outsiders is all of this visible and, moreover, urgent?

“The archive” seeks to distance itself from “the archives,” fleeing the inconvenience of material objects and highly gendered and racialized archival labor. For artists, writers, and theorists, “the archive” is like the Detroit that new occupiers and tourists believe they see: a fascinating, exotic wilderness where historical narratives manifest in disconnected, free-to-remix fragments, populated by people whose needs and agency are matters left for others to address; a place visitors believe to be *terra nullius*, open for unchallenged occupation. Just about any contemporary artist-built collection of images, objects, data, or emotions is nonspecifically designated “an archive,” as if to add glamor to assembly. And while artists and scholars express deep fascination with archives and thrill at touring them, they don’t think very imaginatively about real ones.[4] With few exceptions, scholars see archives as cabinets of curiosities or as glorified warehouses, service organizations tasked with enabling their research, and they outsource the maintenance of their research base to workers whom they insufficiently respect.

4. Michelle Caswell’s essential paper (2016) describes the “failure of interdisciplinarity” between humanities scholarship and archival studies.

My polarized treatment of these terms is not meant to express contempt but rather hope for their reunification and the reconnection of the practices to which they refer. Could we try to reconcile the conceptual umbrella we call “the archive” with the more quotidian work of “the archives”? Could we daylight both archival theory and practice, construct and workplace? And could we try to draw connections between academic, artistic, and archival labor? This would require greater engagement with archives as working entities, and a commitment not only to rendering archival labor visible, but seeing it as decisive.[5] We might listen harder to the people who perform archival labor and begin to reframe it as cultural work and research in its own right, rather than simply wage labor. Archives are indeed microcosms of the world whose records they contain and organs through which power is expressed, but power and the

5. Tansey (2016) describes the “marginalization from the public sphere” that affects archivists, despite their essential role in maintaining the historical and cultural record.

labor maintaining it exist in covalent bondage. Just as we cannot think of domesticity without domestic labor, and we cannot imagine the university without workers supporting other workers who are paid to produce knowledge, we can neither conceive of nor critique archives without taking into account the core labor of those who maintain them.[6]

Too few have considered the politics of archival workflow. This alone would establish cause for intervention, but the problem may be more fundamental than that. A nuanced and actionable understanding of how day-to-day archival workflow both mirrors and sustains external structures of power requires the kind of attention that art historians might pay to brushstrokes, film theorists to editing rhythms, and psychologists to microaggressions. How do the protocols of archival film inspection, the removal of staples from archival documents, and best practices of photographic scanning contribute to power differentials and influence the way in which archival records can be perceived, touched, and reused?[7] Because there are no clean records: records bear the markers not only of their creators and those who may have used them as levers of power but also bear the traces of their archival lives.

We should not expect our future archival queries to return us unmediated records. We might instead hope to see traces of workflow and markers of the record's life in the same way we see scratches on old film, scribbling in old textbooks, tearstains on old letters, and the injuries levied by war and conflict.

6. As far as I can determine, Jessa Lingel (2016) was the first writer to explicitly link "the fetish of the archive" with the unwillingness of outsiders to recognize archival labor. Archivist Hillel Arnold (2016) suggests that maintenance studies is a framework for understanding archivists' marginalization and invisibility.

7. Greene and Meissner (2005) examined and critiqued the ritualistic nature of textual archival processing in a paper that remains controversial ten years after its publication.

Personal Records and Vernacular Collecting

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF INCONVENIENCE*, BY RICK PRELINGER.

Access to personal records is one issue; long-term, infinite capacity, robust, and sustainable storage another.[...] What might infinite storage mean? The possibility of infinite storage actually invokes all sorts of fascinating problems of abundance. Infinite storage depreciates the value of individual records. Infinite warehouses make it easier to lose individual pallets. Infinite repositories of memory will enable forgetting on an unprecedented scale. Even the prospect of infinite digital storage revalidates the beleaguered physical artifact. Infinite storage will revivify old-school, artisanal-style curation. The paradox of infinite storage is that it will finally convince many of us not to hoard, because when loss is no longer a possibility, surviving records lose their privilege.

Nontransparent societies (most societies, other than perhaps Scandinavian) are unlikely to resolve the question of access to personal records. Archives whose chief raison d'être is to preserve nonstate historical and cultural records seek to be open (however the cultural meaning of "openness" may shift in time and place), and they wish to serve needs that do not explicitly facilitate surveillance and control. But for the moment it is impossible to provide the same kind of access to records with sensitive personal characteristics as to public and institutional records (especially government records that have been released or are statutorily open), and therefore personal records tend to be held under conditions that replicate the traditional inaccessibility of most archival collections. We are seeing this today with records of social movements, such as Occupy and Black Lives Matter. Most would agree that preserving these records is an imperative, but when we look more closely at their content and realize the legal and personal vulnerabilities of identifiable participants in these movements, our reservations grow.

There are other important reasons to keep many records quiet or private. Much traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expression is not intended for sharing outside the community or society in which it was created, and often not meant to be shared between all community members. To expose and disperse knowledge with ceremonial or spiritual significance can be an act of cultural aggression that perpetuates the history of wars against Aboriginal, Indigenous, and Native peoples. Many established repositories hold and expose records whose public visibility offends and endangers traditional communities. "Open access for all, to all" cannot be a culturally universal call.[26]

26. Scholar Kimberly Christen (2012 and 2018) has collaborated with Indigenous communities to develop archival management systems and platforms for managing their curatorial and archival needs. Critiquing generalized calls for "openness," she advocates the incorporation of "a wider range of ethical and cultural concerns into our digital tools."

The paradox, then, is that much of what we must collect must also remain silent. Emerging repositories of personal and community records may inhabit vaults with virtual time clocks corresponding to every person represented in the archives, each ticking toward its own unlocking date. Is this really a situation to avoid?—we might ask. At the very least, it is ironic. The advent of ubiquitous networked digital cultures has forced many cultural and historical archives to rethink the restrictions they have traditionally placed on access to their holdings.

The Internet's ascendancy has also drowned us with senses of entitlement and possibility, allowing us to imagine that, yes, we can in fact collect the traces of all of our lives. But some of the new collections that can dive deep into our individual and community's histories and intentions may for now be too inconvenient to be freely shared.

[...]

Amateurism

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF INCONVENIENCE*, BY RICK PRELINGER.

[...] Archives are equally challenged by vernacular efforts to collect, manage, and preserve the historical record, and only the most courageous archivists have looked into the future and recognized uncoordinated decentralization as positive. Distributed collecting does raise complicated questions: it seems likely to me that the archival future will be much more about the coordination of a mass of collecting efforts than about the niceties of selection and appraisal; what future digital archivists are able to save will result from billions of lucky accidents, and one of their jobs will be to share knowledge of what data persists and keep track of evolving idiosyncratic recordkeeping models.

Popular archival practice doesn't get as much attention as the latest viral video, but it's excitingly disruptive. Personal, independent, and community collections enable research and access in ways that more traditionally organized institutions cannot. They may not be nearly as organized or comprehensive, but they are often more direct and efficient. [...]

Nontraditional entities can often be better at collecting specialized materials (nontextual, for instance) that can be vexing to traditional collections. And by defamiliarizing the compartmentation and seemingly mysterious workflows that exist in most special collections, independent collections encourage users and archivists to imagine about how future libraries and archives might work. Of all entities we might call "archival," independent, community and amateur collections come closest to actionable spaces, possessing all the virtues, and of course the flaws, of amateurism.

AMATEURISM

[...] Perhaps the firehose of personal records requires centralized institutions that can collect at scale. But already individuals and nonprofessionalized groups are often the first responders and sometimes the most assiduous preservers of personal (and certain impersonal, depending upon their focus) digital materials. If true, we are heading into a delightfully kaleidoscopic period of archival practices, a panorama of outsider collections whose allure will radiate from the methods by which they were collected and organized, rather than by what they may contain. [...]

Authorship, Law, and Legitimacy

→ IN *SYSTEM OF A TAKEDOWN*, BY MARCELL MARS AND TOMISLAV MEDAK.

[...] Copyright has a fundamentally economic function—to unambiguously establish individualized property in the products of creative labor. A clear indication of this economic function is the substantive requirement of originality that the work is expected to have in order to be copyrightable. Legal interpretations set a very low standard on what counts as original, as their function is no more than to demarcate one creative contribution from another. Once a legal title is unambiguously assigned, there is a person holding property with whose consent the contracting, commodification, and marketing of the work can proceed.[5]

In that respect copyright is not that different from the requirement of formal freedom that is granted to a laborer to contract out their own labor-power as a commodity to capital, giving capital authorization to extract maximum productivity and appropriate the products of the laborer's labor.[6] Copyright might be just a more efficient mechanism of exploitation as it unfolds through selling of produced commodities and not labor power.

Art market obscures and mediates the capital-labor relation.When we talk today of illegal copying, we primarily mean an infringement of the legal rights of authors and publishers. There's an immediate assumption that the infringing practice of illegal copying and distribution falls under the domain of juridical sanction, that it is a matter of law. Yet if we look to the history of copyright, the illegality of copying was a political matter long before it became a legal one.

5. "In law, authorship is a point of origination of a property right which, thereafter, like other property rights, will circulate in the market, ending up in the control of the person who can exploit it most profitably. Since copyright serves paradoxically to vest authors with property only to enable them to divest that property, the author is a notion which needs only to be sustainable for an instant" (Bently 1994).

6. For more on the formal freedom of the laborer to sell his labor-power, see chapter 6 of Marx's Capital (1867)

Publisher's rights, author's rights, and mechanisms of reputation— the three elements that are fundamental to the present-day copyright system—all have their historic roots in the context of absolutism and early capitalism in seventeenth- and eighteenthcentury Europe. Before publishers and authors were given a temporary monopoly over the exploitation of their publications instituted in the form of copyright, they were operating in a system where they were forced to obtain a privilege to print books from royal censors. The first printing privileges granted to publishers, in early seventeenth-century Great Britain,[7] came with the responsibility of publishers to control what was being published and disseminated in a growing body of printed matter that started to reach the public in the aftermath of the invention of print and the rise of the reading culture. The illegality in these early days of print referred either to printing books without the permission of the censor or printing books that were already published by another printer in the territory where the censor held authority. The transition from the privilege tied to the publisher to the privilege tied to the natural person of the author would unfold only later. [...]

Although the Romantic author slowly took the center stage in copyright regulations, economic compensation for the work would long remain no more than honorary. Until well into the eighteenth century, literary writing and creativity in general were regarded as resulting from divine inspiration and not the individual genius of the author. Writing was a work of honor and distinction, not something requiring an honest day's pay.[8] Money earned in the growing printing industry mostly stayed in the pockets of publishers, while the author received literally an honorarium, a flat sum that served as a "token of esteem" (Woodmansee 1996, 42). It is only once authors began to voice demands for securing their material and political independence from patronage and authority that they also started to make claims for rightful remuneration.

Thus, before it was made a matter of law, copyright was a matter of politics and economy.

7. For a more detailed account of the history of printing privilege in Great Britain, but also the emergence of peer review out of the self-censoring performed by the Royal Academy and Académie de sciences in return for the printing privilege, see Biagioli 2002.

8. The transition of authorship from honorific to professional is traced in Woodmansee 1996.

Where Law Was, There Politics Shall Be

→ IN *SYSTEM OF A TAKEDOWN*, BY MARCELL MARS AND TOMISLAV MEDAK.

[...]The parallel development of liberalism, copyright, and capitalism has resulted in a system demanding that the contemporary subject act in accordance with two opposing tendencies: “more capitalist than capitalist and more proletarian than proletariat” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 34). Schizophrenia is, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, a condition that simultaneously embodies two disjunctive positions. Desire and blockage, flow and territory.

Capitalism is the constant decoding of social blockages and territorializations aimed at liberating the production of desires and flows further and further, only to oppose them at its extreme limit. It decodes the old socius by means of private property and commodity production, privatization and abstraction, the flow of wealth and flows of workers (140).

It allows contemporary subjects—including corporate entities such as the MIT Press or Sony—to embrace their contradictions and push them to their limits. But capturing them in the orbit of the self-expanding production of value, it stops them at going beyond its own limit. It is this orbit that the law sanctions in the present, recoding schizoid subjects into the inevitability of capitalism. The result is the persistence of a capitalist reality antithetical to common interest—commercial closed-access academic publishing—and the persistence of a hyperproletariat—an intellectual labor force that is too subsumed to organize and resist the reality that thrives parasitically on its social function. It’s a schizoid impasse sustained by a failed metaphor.

[...]

Digital networks have expanded the potential for access and created an opening for us to transform the production of knowledge and culture in the contemporary world. And yet they have likewise facilitated the capacity of intellectual property industries to optimize, to cut out the cost of printing and physical distribution. 65 Digitization is increasingly helping them to control access, expand copyright, impose technological protection measures, consolidate the means of distribution, and capture the academic valorization process.

As the potential opening for universalizing access to culture and knowledge created by digital networks is now closing, attempts at private legal reform such as Creative Commons licenses have had only a very limited effect. Attempts at institutional reform such as Open Access publishing are struggling to go beyond a niche. Piracy has mounted a truly disruptive opposition, but given the legal repression it has met with, it can become an agent of change only if it is embraced as a kind of mass civil disobedience. Where law was, there politics shall be.

Many will object to our demand to replace the law with politicization. Transitioning from politics to law was a social achievement as the despotism of political will was suppressed by legal norms guaranteeing rights and liberties for authors; this much is true. But in the face of the draconian, failed juridical rationality sustaining the schizoid impasse imposed by economic despotism, these developments hold little justification. Thus we return once more to the words of Aaron Swartz to whom we remain indebted for political inspiration and resolve: "There is no justice in following unjust laws. It's time to come into the light and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture. . . . With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge—we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?" (Swartz 2008).

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FRAGMENTATION

What it Means to Be Lost and Living (in) Archives

→ IN *INTRODUCTION*, BY ANNET DEKKER.

‘What is archive?’ is one of the standard questions when discussing archives and it solicits several answers, ranging from the physical building or location, to the gathering of documents in these spaces, or the more conceptual response of process-bound information that refers to the way documents (or records) are created, structured and recorded as part of working processes and by which they can be queried and probed (Horsman 2009). Other descriptions exist, but depending on the different purposes and functions of an institution, in general archives are defined in relation to their context. However, as Michel Foucault expressed, an archive cannot be described from within or in its totality, rather ‘it emerges in fragments, regions and levels’ (Foucault 2010, 130). It is from these different fragments, regions and levels that the authors in this publication describe archival practices.

Archives have always been subjected to fragmentation, even those that are regulated by law. A document in an archive can change location, be recontextualised and at times destroyed in preference of another document, thus fracturing a once neatly organized administrative working process. As such, no archive is entirely stable or fixed. However, digital documents have increased the fragmentary nature of archives.

Whereas in the paper archive, documents and the archival administrative system are clearly divided, ‘with digital archives, documents and contents are no longer separated from the archival infrastructure: once the archive is based on networked data circulation, its emphatic form dissolves into the coding and protocol layer, into electronic circuits or data flow’ (Blom 2016, 12). Inextricably intertwined with their archival system, documents are not merely created with the same material, thus making it difficult to distinguish between different or the same file names and extensions, but most digital documents (if one can still use the term ‘document’) are not single entities and often consist of various links that are distributed inside a single and/or various documents. These ‘documents’ exist and thrive in ecologies, or assemblages, and this interdependence makes it increasingly difficult to create meaningful relations between different layers of content.

This development recalls French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s claim in his often-cited article ‘Archive Fever’ (1995) that mutations in technology not only alter the archival process, but also what is archivable: in other words, technology changes the content of what is archived.[1]

What this means is that not only the style of the content is different through new processes and production methods, but that its relation to time and space has changed too. The time spent searching and finding information is reduced to mere seconds, which affects the content of what is produced and how it is archived. Of course, knowing that information that could immediately influence a situation reaches someone within a certain time period also affects power relations, decision-making and accountability.[2] In other words, the shape of an archive constrains and enables the content it encloses, and the technical methods for building and supporting an archive produce the document for collection.[3]

In the last decades, the notion of archive has expanded, from various institutions trying to secure evidence, memory and history to a proliferation of ad hoc archives that are generated by everyone, many of which circulate on the web. It could be stated that today everything is archive and everyone an archivist. People everywhere constantly create, collect, document, make lists, inventories, classify, store, retrieve, and reuse all kinds of information. Not surprisingly, Eric Ketelaar (Emeritus Professor of Archivistics at the University of Amsterdam) proclaimed ‘Everyone an Archivist’ (Ketelaar 2006, 14). In his eponymous

1. Playing off Derrida’s Archive Fever, Katrina Sluis examines the material structures that support the sorting, searching, and filtering of digital memories, proclaiming a database fever. Accessible tools and cheap storage provide new opportunities to ‘cache’ one’s life, and whole practices of editing and annotation are largely being replaced by passive accumulation, the problem of managing a snapshot collection, which might number in the thousands, has spawned the development of software interfaces in which the paradigm of the album has been reinvented as a database with a search field. [...]

2. Some of these power relations are scrutinised by Femke Snelting in her essay ‘Not Dissimilar’. [...] This essay explores messy entanglements of faltering local governments, dreams of accessible knowledge, and the desire for corporate patronage.

essay he describes how the meaning of the term archive has gone 'feral', and how ordinary people have become archivists too, as evidenced by the popularity of uploading and using online archival platforms for photographs, videos, music, et cetera, as well as those supporting and helping to maintain large online archival facilities such as the Internet Archive (Ketelaar 2006). Ten years later, the creation of documents and their aggregation into all sorts of different—especially online—archives has become part of everyday life.

3. In a time when access to images is increasingly mediated by services such as Google Image Search, the Scandinavian Institute for Computational Vandalism, a pun on the Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism (SICV) founded by Asger Jorn in 1961, describe some of the difficulties they encountered when digitising a photographic archive.[...]

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Introduction

→ BY L'INTER-
NATIONALE
ONLINE.

[...] In a similar way to museums and other traditional institutions of the European nation states (though their roots are of course much older), the archives have in the last decades undergone significant changes towards higher accessibility and transparency, facilitated mainly through the advances of the digital technologies. These changes have resulted in new challenges which offer unforeseen possibilities for democratisation both in terms of access and knowledge production by new, often marginalised, voices. At the same time, many archives around the world inhabit a fine line between the risks of neglect and decay on one hand, and privatisation and fetishisation due to their rising market value on the other hand.

The archival treasure hunt to satisfy the growing demand of institutions in the old and new imperial centres is just one example of coloniality as a condition outliving colonialism itself and continuing to discipline archives in terms of access and political instrumentalisation.

The decolonisation of archives has a broader meaning beyond interrogating the colonial legacy and existing, or even emerging, neo-colonial power relations. [...]

In recent years, we have witnessed the revolutionary redefinition of archives through digitisation and online sharing. Digitisation and online sharing of vast amounts of archival documents can however, when they are done with no reflection, easily turn into a pseudo-democratic end in itself, resulting in an overload of the material available online. Such misguided generosity can solidify rather than challenge the established Western narratives when colonised archives merely supplement and thus confirm their primacy. Yet, if understood as a creative chance, digitisation can become a true decolonial tool. As navigation and retrieval become of critical importance due to the abundance of digitised material, scholars within the field of digital humanities, as well as artists, point out new algorithms and semantic search as new more welcoming guides rather than obsolete gatekeepers. While progressive code writers will undoubtedly continue to play an indispensable role in making the archives more accessible and democratic, most of the decolonisation is, however, to be done on the epistemological level. It is precisely here that artists play a crucial role when they engage with archives and unearth testimonies which put the official historical narrative into question or reframe what is seemingly known and highlight its inner contradictions to resist simplifying homogenisation.

[...]

Unfolding the Layers of the “Colonised” Archive

→ IN *RADICALLY DE-HISTORICISING THE ARCHIVE*, BY WOLFGANG ERNST.

In cultural discourse, in the art world and in political activism, the term “archive” has mostly become a generalised metaphor for different kinds of collections of traces from the past. While in public discourse the archive is mostly (mis-)understood as the “content” of the archive (its records, its data banks), in archival sciences the term rather refers to the organising structure. Against intellectual or artistic fantasies of “the anarchival” (Fürlus & Giannetti 2014), the digital archive is still rigorously rooted in its techno-mathematical structure, while the dynarchive lies between the archival and the anarchival spheres.

The administrative archive in the strict sense is a read-only memory. One cannot simply take out archival records because they are politically incorrect, neither can the archival order as such (key term “tectonics”) be easily changed according to a new discursive will. Just like in computing, a rewriting of code in the operating system would make the whole function collapse. It is exactly the non-discursive and non-narrative structure of the archive which makes it such a uniquely powerful institution. Therefore, acts such as revealing the genealogy of the institutional archives as grounded in the imperial nation states have to operate on an epistemological level, through non-invasive re-reading, un-covering the ties between archive and narrative history as master discourse of the traditional nation state.

Digital archiving, as Friedrich Kittler has pointed out, could break up the alliance that the institutional archives have maintained with historiography and historicism since 1800. Moreover, the chronological

sequence could be replaced by an order of copresence once their combinatory connections were located (Kittler 1996, p. 75).

The digitisation of vast amounts of archival records brings a creative chance. Applying creative algorithms to experiment with new forms of navigating enormous amounts of archival signals and data (textual or audio-visual) results in new insights by mathematical intelligence like entropy values, stochastic analysis and similarity-based retrieval. Such operations are possible in computational space without destroying the material and symbolic order of the existing archive.

Similar media-archaeological approaches to the digitised archive allow new readings of the archive. Yet the archive – with the new digitised infrastructures linked online to data circulation, storage, processing and surveillance on the Internet – is at the same time colonised in new and unexpected ways by non-human agencies like the NSA (National Security Agency). What look like creative applications of software in big data research by digital humanities are nothing but a side-product of data processing avantgardes developed by intelligence services.

De-historisation: De-coupling the Archive from the Nation State

→ IN *RADICALLY DE-HISTORI-CISING THE ARCHIVE*, BY WOLFGANG ERNST.

The modern archive is closely related to the territorial nation state. With scholars like Jules Michelet in France and Leopold von Ranke in Germany, the rise of research-based history as an academic discipline co-originated with the new impulse to go (back) to the archives.

The rise of the modern nation state required a foundational narrative of its temporal genealogy, resulting in a re-organisation of the archives "in the name of history" as a new discourse – provided by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in the case of Prussia, with a proper philosophy of history which gave the state a deep-temporal sense and teleological ("metahistorical" in Hayden White's sense) justification, with the present state as its happy end. Via the historical discourse, the administrative state which is an infra-structural function (and represents the symbolic order of power) could be transformed into an imaginary called "nation".

Archival Order as Non-Narrative Alternative to Historiography

→ IN *RADICALLY DE-HISTORICISING THE ARCHIVE*, BY WOLFGANG ERNST.

Beyond the "cultural turn" of the last two or three decades concerned with cultural and collective memory, the critical focus has now shifted to the analysis of techno-cultural temporal dynamics of social, administrative and technological systems. The archive is set in motion (Ernst 2010). Let us therefore address the archive not as a coherent depository for memory supply but instead identify its multiplicity of temporal layers with and within memory technologies.

Since the notion of the archive has been extended from the symbolic order (alphabetical texts) to the storage of signals (like physical sound and imagery), a memory has emerged which is capable of addressing human perception in a kind of repeatable hyperpresence. This does not only re-present, but actually enacts different aggregations of the past.

My epistemological intention is to liberate archival memory from its reductive subjection to the discourse of history and re-install it as an agency of multiple temporal poetics in its own right. In the context discussed here, (media-) archaeology is not just an auxiliary discipline to history, but as well a genuinely alternative model of processing data from the material archives of the past. While historical discourse strives for narrative coherence, the archaeological aesthetics deals with discrete, serial strings of information which – in an age of computing – gains new plausibility against literary forms of historical imagination developed in the nineteenth century.

[...]

Buried (and) Alive

→ BY JEFFREY SCHNAPP.

Like the royal burial grounds with which they were once associated, archives were born as sites of longterm conservation whose contents were thought to have transcended temporal bounds. Few categories of materials were believed to be worthy of elevation into their supratemporal ether. There was little space for documenting the evanescent or contested features of human existence, not to mention the actions of contemporaries or peripheries, in the archivum.

In the course of their modern history, archives have undergone a democratisation that touches every aspect of their existence, from the nature of the documents collected to practices of organisation and consultation to the design of the edifices that house them. Archives now collect more varieties of media and materials than in any preceding epoch. These materials are increasingly accessible both onsite and off-site.

Analogue objects lead double lives alongside digital surrogates surrounded by growing haloes of metadata, data, and capta. They do so in an array of media that extends cultural memory beyond the hand and eye to, for instance, the ear. Last but not least, this expanded sensorium of cultural memory is accompanied by new forms of capture that allow for time-scales that would have been inconceivable only a century ago: from documentation of macroevents that occur over centuries (like environmental changes) to that of micro-events that occur on the scale of seconds (viz. snapshots and tweets).

The above narrative might smack of triumphalism if the march towards democratisation, proliferation, and an expanded concept of the cultural record didn't have nested within it a series of challenges that are also opportunities for renewal. The latter encompass a rethinking of uniform processing and conservation practices; new models of search, discovery, and retrieval, as well as information use and sharing; outreach to audiences that are infrequently served by traditional brick-and-mortar archives; an augmented approach to description and cataloguing that treats every cultural object not as a singular entity but as a web of relations; and even a rethinking of the very notion of "archive" along more flexible and fluid lines.

[...]

The challenges we face today are multiple: to layer a diversity of representations on top of the standard descriptors so as to better approach the full sensorium – the weight, the texture, the feeling – of cultural objects; to unjam data resources through open APIs (Application Programme Interface) and linked data environments so as to give rise to virtual realms of curation where researchers can work with open collections data and stories can be told through and with individual objects (excavated down to the nano scale) as well as with collection-sized aggregates. Every object is a collection. Every collection is a social network of things. Objects and collections have friends. It is time to mobilise them as well as to "describe" them through representations that attend to the acoustical and haptic (not just the ocular).

Every burial ground needs to be cared for continuously if it is to endure.

Hypothesis 1
Archives of the Commons are Common by Nature, and Defend the Commons

→ IN *ARCHIVES OF THE COMMONS*, BY CARLOS PRIETO DEL CAMPO.

The fight against new enclosures ties in with the defence of the archive as a commons, and as such its management models must simultaneously enable: (1) the construction of decentralised, open, diverse, democratic “exercises in memory” generated by subjects connected to the need to preserve the historical memory in question, and (2) a form of conservation and feedback that ensures that the growth, accessibility, conditions of use and quality of access of the archive are diverse, democratic, and universal.

To this end, the research aims to explore the institutional strategies that guarantee the emergence of this new ecology of memory, as well as the common reconstruction of history through the creativity of modes of conservation of social experience. Unless collective memory has the opportunity to re-create and construct itself from the perspective of different groups, experiences of shared interests, political orientations, intellectual sensibilities, and senses of historicity, there will not be the minimum diversity required to build the new fragments that make up the social imagination. And this new ecology of memory and construction of the social – and therefore political – imagination will only be feasible if the experience of historicity and of the archive of the commons can guarantee the distributed and decentralised production of the information commons, which is its bedrock. These information commons are thus the fundamental element that the archive initially produces or could produce.

Today, the information commons are subject to powerful processes of enclosure that seriously hinder the creation of archives of the commons and their potential role as key devices for the distribution and interaction of social memory. From the perspective of the archives of the commons, the information commons contribute to building the knowledge commons of the historical sense of collective memory.

Both types of commons must be specific areas of reflection within the field of the archive of the commons, and they must be at the centre of production of a new institutionality. This hypothesis could also be formulated as an affirmation by which the archive of the commons is a device that produces and guarantees access to and conservation of the new information and knowledge commons, and that, in its operation, counteracts, opposes, or blocks the social, institutional, and technological enclosures that threaten these material and immaterial commons. This dual action is what guarantees the construction and democratic use of the archives of the commons.

Decolonial Sensibilities

→ BY CRYSTAL FRASER AND ZOE TODD.

In theorising the idea of 'decolonising' the archives, we are faced with a number of structural issues that must be unpacked and we do so in the Canadian context. In this short piece, we first question *who controls* these archives? Second, we examine the *archival holdings* themselves, pointing to both the absent within the holdings themselves and the gaps in our knowledge about archival holdings. A final question asks: should we have the goal of 'decolonising archives'?

Acknowledging the inherent colonial paradigms that inform and shape the archives as institutions, we propose moving away from the question of decolonising the archives themselves and suggest instead applying a *historically-informed critical decolonial sensibility* in our engagement with the archives.

During recent months, the idea of reconciliation has been brought to the forefront of the Canadian socio-political terrain, largely ensuing from efforts to examine the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system. This was a system that sought to eliminate Indigenous cultures, in part, by forcibly removing children from their families to obtain a state-based education, often far away from their homes to institutions characterised by substandard and abysmal living conditions. The shift to reconciliation and efforts to achieve a "nation-to-nation relationship" has prompted a great deal of attention and new questions of access, content, and ownership of historical documents dealing with the history and legacies of IRS. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) battled the federal government for access to files and documents in possession of the Government of Canada pertaining to the centuries-old history of IRS in Canada, illustrating some of the nuances and complexities inherent in the question of 'decolonising the archives'. For Indigenous peoples, access to state or church archives is complicated, given ongoing settler-colonial realities that frame and govern archives in Canada.

To decolonise the archives requires an erasure or negation of the colonial realities of the archives themselves. Given the inherent colonial realities of the archives as institutions, any effort to decolonise or Indigenise the archives in Canada can therefore only ever be partial.

The Hump of Colonialism or the Archive as Site of Resistance

→ BY RONA SELA.

[...] Another project which sought to challenge the official Israeli archival materials is a project I worked on called *Haifa: 1948-2013* (Sela 2013, pp. 243-244). This was based on the research materials used by "official" historian Tamir Goren for his book *Arab Haifa* in 1948 published in 2006. I presented the documents that he collected but were not eventually included in this book. Goren's book, written from a Zionist perspective, largely avoids any issues that are inconsistent with the official national narrative, such as acts of aggression towards Palestinian civilians, massive dismissals of Palestinian workers, looting, refusal to let families reunite, or Jews who squatted in Palestinian homes. These findings, which were collected by him in his research but not exposed, were presented in *Haifa: 1948-2013*.

[...]

This project exposes just a few of the countless letters written by members of the Palestinian Nakba generation who remained in the country and had to cope with the impossible conditions imposed by the new Israeli rulers. Stored in official archives, these letters were mostly written by Hebrew-speaking lawyers on their behalf, and accordingly their tone is apologetic if not subservient. Beyond this facade, however, the letters – now exposed to the public for the first time – clearly voice the tremendous hardships and insults experienced by the Nakba generation. They also provide detailed information about the looted property, ethnic cleansing and more – information that is essential for the future writing of Palestinian history.

RESISTANCE

In 2009, [...] I presented at Pecha-Kucha Jerusalem a series of aerial photographs, taken by pre-State Jewish military forces, of Palestinian villages and towns from this project. Taken by the Palmach Squadron as intelligence gathering for surveillance, control and occupation purposes, from 1946 to early 1948, these photographs were accompanied by extensive textual surveys and photographs ("village files") of Palestinian villages and towns collected by Jewish scouts on the ground for the same targets. They were declassified in the last decade. In the event I claimed that these images and surveys, can today change their colonial functionality and original targets and expose the Palestinian geographical deployment that Israel ruined in 1948 and after. They are, therefore, the last evidence of the Palestinian entity before the Nakba. A member of the audience asked whether I was not afraid that these hundreds of aerial photographs in military archives in Israel would be classified again. [...]

Despite the "archive guards" who continue to control the official representation of the archives and the way they are loaded by meaning, the control over the history of the oppressed enables , in an unexpected manner, the emergence of new forms of "archival resistance". While these "archive guards" control the various "stages of production" of meaning and strengthen their domination over the process of knowledge production; new creative and marginalised ways to define the boundaries of the archives and free them from biased contents are created by artists and researchers, consolidating the archive's role as a site of resistance.

Techno-Political Devices

→ IN *THE ARCHIVES OF THE COMMONS*, BY MELA DÁVILA, CARLOS PRIETO DEL CAMPO MARISA PÉREZ COLINA AND MABEL TAPIA.

The technological form of an archive is inseparable from its political dimension. With the introduction of the Internet, the archive has become one of the key battlegrounds of contemporary societies. The creation of technological devices that allow openness, as well as hybrid, mutable taxonomies, collective production, and universal accessibility, is the condition of possibility for *Archives of the Commons*.

Key questions in regard to an archive of the commons include: When was it created, in what context, and for what purpose? (Conditions of emergence). Who owns it? Who does it represent? Who does it target or address? Who determines its uses? (Ownership of the archive). What does it contain? What are the criteria for inclusion in the archive? How is the archive organised? What about the production of metadata? And interoperability markers? (Structure and classification criteria). How is it presented, disseminated, and activated? (Modes of activation: curatorial, research-related, and political. Modes of dissemination, interconnection, and access). How is it managed and how is its sustainability ensured? (Sustainable management models and strategies). What conceptual, archival, and technological devices are or should be used?

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INSTITUTIONS

DIGITAL MEDIA

Memory Escapes the State

→ IN *INTRODUCTION*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

Memory has gone rogue. What I mean by this, first of all, is that memory has *fallen into the hands of rogues*.

From the late nineteenth through the late twentieth century, memory— not private, individual memory, but public, collective memory—was the domain of the state. Writes Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum*, "Museums, galleries, and, more intermittently, exhibitions played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental to its conception as, among other things, a set of educative and civilizing agencies." Bennett points out that "all developed nation-states" have consistently prioritized funding for their memory institutions, and have benefited from these institutions serving as "mechanisms for the permanent display of power," and as "influential cultural technologies" that testify to the states' "ability to command, order, and control objects and bodies, living or dead" (Bennett 1995, 66). Achille Mbembe argues that "the term 'archives'" is first of all understood as referring to "a public institution, which is one of the organs of a constituted state. … There is no state without archives" (Mbembe 2002, 19, 23).[1]

1. t the same time, Mbembe argues that a state often detests its archives, for archives record the state's past violence and crimes, and for this reason, states secretly "long to abolish the archive and anaesthetise the past" (Mbembe 2002, 23). Some states indeed have attempted to "silence" or "destroy" their archives—but more commonly, states "have sought to 'civilise' the ways in which the archive might be consumed," for example through instituting commemorations of past events, the ultimate objective of which is "less to [cause the people to] remember than to forget" (23–24).

But when digital networked media began displacing earlier forms of transmission (television, radio, cinema, print) as what Philip Auslander calls "the cultural dominant" (Auslander 2008, 23) in regions with widespread Internet access, the ties binding public memory to the state began to loosen, and memory started to forge links with many other masters: people who never underwent training in library and information sciences (LIS) but designated themselves "archivists" anyway, built freely accessible online archives, and began uploading (or assisting users with uploading) whatever content they deemed suitable for digital preservation. Digital archiving, while of increasing interest to traditional memory institutions, has been most enthusiastically embraced by nonprofessionals—by amateurs, fans, hackers, pirates, and volunteers—in other words, by "rogue" memory workers. Digital archives of cultural content, not associated with any physical museum, library, or archive, populate the Internet, to the point that many people refer to the Internet as a giant archive. (For example, Lev Manovich states in *The Language of New Media*, "The Internet … can be thought of as one huge distributed media database" [Manovich 2001, 55].)

Rogue archivists explore the potential of digital technologies to democratize cultural memory. With digital tools and networks, they construct repositories that are accessible by all Internet users, and can choose to preserve either vast quantities of information (they do not have to choose to save some types of content and discard other types because of physical space restrictions) or highly specific materials (such as the documents of subcultures or minority groups) that have been consistently excluded or ignored by traditional memory institutions.

In *Rogues*, Jacques Derrida relates the "*roué*" or "rogue," the figure of licentiousness and debauchery in French culture since the eighteenth century, to democracy: "Democracy, the passage to democracy, *democratization*, will have always been associated with license, with taking too many liberties, with the dissoluteness of the libertine, with liberalism, indeed perversion and delinquency, with malfeasance, with failing to live according to the law, with the notion that 'everything is allowed,' that 'anything goes'" (Derrida 2005, 21). In other words, the process of ending monarchy and inaugurating democracy in France depended on rogues willing to "take liberties" with the very notion of liberty and make themselves over from king's subjects into republican citizens. Similarly, since the late-1980s advent of what we might call the public Internet (that is, the time when the Internet ceased to be a network usable only by government, university, and

research lab employees, and became a network with which millions of people engaged on a daily basis),[2] rogue archivists have acted on the assumption that "anything goes" on the network, taking the initiative to design, found, and run their own cultural memory institutions without waiting for traditional institutions to set any precedents for online archiving, and achieving a degree of democratic inclusion and access for which brick-and-mortar archives never even aimed. What I call *rogue archives* are defined by: constant (24/7) availability; zero barriers to entry for all who can connect to the Internet; content that can be streamed or downloaded in full, with no required payment, and no regard for copyright restrictions (some rogue archivists digitize only what is already in the public domain); and content that has never been, and would likely never be, contained in a traditional memory institution.

[...]

2. See "History of the Internet" (Brady and Eikner 2011) and Brügger 2010, 2–3.

Memory and making

→ IN *INTRODUCTION*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

Memory has gone rogue in another sense: where it used to mean the *record* of cultural production, memory is now the *basis* of a great deal of cultural production. Digital technologies facilitate what Lawrence Lessig (2008) and many others call "remix culture," that is, the appropriation and transformation of mass media texts (including films, television episodes, recorded music, video games, comic books, novels, and so on) into alternate versions, with traces of the "source" texts lingering in the new "takes," the remixes.

The people formerly known as the "audience" or as "consumers," whom many media scholars conceived of as passive recipients of popular culture, have shown themselves to be quite active users of culture instead. Media users have seized hold of all of mass culture *as an archive*, an enormous repository of narratives, characters, worlds, images, graphics, and sounds from which they can extract the raw matter they need for their own creations, their alternatives to or customizations of the sources.

Cultural memory has thus gone rogue with respect to its own temporality, its own place in the order and timing of things. Engagement with cultural memory is therefore not only what comes after the making and distribution of cultural texts, it also now often precedes that making, or occurs at every step throughout the process of making. So many digital works begin as acts of memory, with a user remembering a loved (or hated) mass culture text and isolating, then manipulating, revising, and reworking, specific elements of that text. In the past, the chain of media production appeared to conclude with the culture industries' distribution of a finished product. At present, each media commodity becomes, at the instant of its release, an archive to be plundered, an original to be memorized, copied, and manipulated—a starting point or springboard for receivers' creativity, rather than an end unto itself. [...]

Memory has gone rogue in the sense that it has come loose from its fixed place in the production cycle. It now may be found anywhere, or everywhere, in the chain of making. And of course, it still may also be found in its typical place, at the tail of the chain, as media users seek to archive their remixes.

Many "rogue" digital archives have, as their primary mission, the collection and storage of users' versions, digitizations, and transmediations of media texts. Much of digital culture emerges through iterative, serial, and distributed modes of production. Traditional memory institutions were not designed to safeguard cultural texts that proliferate indefinitely. Numerous untraditional digital archives, however, have been designed specifically for this purpose.

Gender, Sexuality, and Digital Archiving

→ IN *INTRODUCTION*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

[...] Countering the depriving, threatening, suppressing, or exploitative attitudes and moves to which women and LGBTQ are frequently exposed on digital networks, Internet fan fiction archives serve as "safe spaces" for the production, publication, distribution, access, and safeguarding of female and queer digital culture. bell hooks states that the second-wave US women's movement articulated the need for "'safe' spaces where groups of presumably like-minded women [can] come together, sharing ideas and experiences without fear of silencing" (hooks 1994, 76);[7] LGBTQ and other equality movements have since applied the concept of "safe spaces" to both real-world and online collectives (New Tactics 2013; Ferguson 2014; Craig 2014). [...]

Internet fan fiction archives also provide another function for women and queer digital culture. Achille Mbembe states that archives confer *status* on their contents, and on the culture and society that produced those contents: "The archive … is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged 'unarchivable.' The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status" (2002, 20). [...] Fans, fan fiction, and fan communities have historically been granted incredibly low status in cultural hierarchies (Jenkins 1992, 9–23; Coppa 2006b, 230–233), and online archives of fan works will not likely alter that ranking. But Mbembe illuminates the power of digital communities' self-made archives to award those communities with the minimal status of *having truly existed*, of their individual and collective cultures *having actually happened,* and therefore of making possible their insertion into history. In the

7. hooks (1994, 76) also notes that many such "'safe' spaces" for women, in "the early years of [the] contemporary feminist movement," tended to be characterized by internal dispute and disagreement rather than harmony. Similarly, Internet fan fiction communities have never been free of conflict or "flame wars." The "safety" of offline and online women's spaces is experienced by many members as occasional and contingent. We might also conceive of open disagreement as integral to "safe" spaces, as most women would not associate being silenced with feelings of safety.

absence of archives of their work, female and queer uses/users of the Internet would risk disappearance and erasure; their cultures would remain unknown and unknowable to subsequent generations, as the existence of so many women's and queer people's cultural expressions in earlier eras have been excluded from the historical record.

Fans who found and operate their communities' digital archives do not guarantee that they or their works will be remembered, but they create the conditions of possibility for persistence and recollection. Perhaps the last quarter-century of digital fan archiving will matter to no one a quartercentury from now; but perhaps digital fan productions made between 1990 and 2015, and many genres of user-generated Internet content from the same time period, will be widely regarded as critically important forms of early digital networked culture, just as silent films hold a venerable place in cinema history and amateur ham radio operators are understood to be the direct ancestors of the broadcasting industries. Maybe successive generations of girls and women and LGBTQ people will benefit from the first twenty-five years of fan archiving; maybe future historians will value the ability to access evidence of what it was to be female and queer online in the first wave of mass Internet use. Fan archivists cultivate this chance, this *may-be*.

Fans' archive building and archive maintenance constitute attempts to prove to the future that particular queer and female ways of being and making existed. If fan archivists did not carefully assemble such proof, women and queer fans' digital collective actions would almost certainly be forgotten, go unlearned, or simply be, as Mbembe puts it, the subjects of doubt, of disbelief that they ever were. In part this forgetting or doubt would result from the ephemerality of digital production, against which all digital archivists must tirelessly work, but it would also arise from the tendency of hegemonic discourse to elide and ignore what it cannot incorporate.

What I have said here of women and queer fans can be said of every nonand counterhegemonic group that forges a community online and seeks to archive its communications and cultural expressions.

Rogue archival efforts are political efforts, for, as Derrida argues, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (Derrida 1995, 11). Those on the edges of power, in real life and in virtual life, continually invent new cultural forms and genres online, prolifically generate and actively spread their digital productions, and establish digital archives, first of all, in order to demonstrate that their cultures and their creations exist and deserve the status and recognition of *being*, and second, to refuse those at the center of power complete "control of the archive."

Rogue archivists insistently pry open "the archive"— digital cultural memory writ large— to include their idiosyncratic repositories, and thus foist some measure of democratization onto the field of contemporary archival practice.

What Is Digital Cultural Memory?

→ IN *BREAK 0*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

[...] Digital cultural memory [...] refers to a moment in time, a turning point in the history of memory institutions: the mid-1990s through the present have been a period of transition from analog to digital formats for libraries, museums, and other predigital archives, and a period of emergence for amateur digital archivists. The role that amateur archivists are playing in the field of digital cultural memory is growing, and has compelled acknowledgment by the archival professions, acknowledgment that has manifested as condemnation by some circles, and as approbation by others.

The phrase *digital cultural memory* also flags an uneasy overlap of new media studies with the research field defined as "memory studies," which analyzes the historical, political, and philosophical significance of personal and collective recollection.

Memory studies goes back at least as far as Plato's (2005 [360 BCE]) *Phaedrus*,[4] but the field in its contemporary form[5] was initiated by Maurice Halbwachs's *Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925, in *On Collective Memory* [1992]), in which Halbwachs articulated his theory of collective memory. Halbwachs argues that, as individuals form their memories in society, "It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. … [Memories] are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them" (Halbwachs 1992, 38). [...] One implication of Halbwachs's work is that a society's technologies for storing and retrieving its memories influence and inform how and what individuals recollect; as Halbwachs states, the "means to reconstruct them

4. The *Phaedrus* contains a famous exchange between two Egyptian gods, Theuth and Thamus. Theuth tells Thamus that he has invented writing in order to aid humans' memories. Thamus replies that writing will not improve humans' memories, but "will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves."

5. See Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011; Winter 2001.

[memories]" are given by the society to the individual. Thus, how digital technologies affect collective "remembering" is a point of interest for memory studies.

Jan and Aleida Assmann, drawing on Halbwachs's theories and on Aby Warburg's 1930s writings on social memory, advanced their idea of cultural memory beginning in the 1980s.[6] Jan Assmann (1995) points out that Halbwachs's and Warburg's thinking resisted the nineteenth-century notion that collective memory depended on biological inheritance ("racial memory" [125] and "survival of the type" [125–126]), and proposed the alternative that cultural memory is the technology by which a society survives. [...] Assmann uses Warburg's capacious idea of objectivized culture, which included "not only works of high art," but also "posters, postage stamps, costumes, customs, etc." (129), which, Warburg argued, possess a type of "mnemonic energy" (129).

6. See Harth 2008; A. Assmann 1996; J. Assmann 2008.

Taking up the Assmanns' and Warburg's arguments that objects and practices—including those that originate in so-called low and everyday culture—are bearers of cultural memory, media scholars over the past twenty years have investigated how collective memory and social identity are consolidated and transmitted through communities' uses of media texts, such as photographs, pop and rock songs, films, television broadcasts, and digital communications.[7] [...]

7. See Meyers, Zandberg, and Neiger 2009; Van Dijck 2007; Kuhn and McAllister 2006; Morley and Robins 2002; Naficy 1993; Strong 2011.

However, even as communities regard digital artifacts as instantiations and transmitters of cultural memory, and eagerly build Internet archives in order to preserve their access to these objects and practices, there is great uncertainty about digital media's capacity to serve as a vehicle for cultural memory over long periods of time. Digital technologies are not perfect archival technologies; rather, they tend toward loss and disappearance. [...]

The rapidity with which digital material is vanishing raises alarms in Geert Lovink that echo the fears of cultural amnesia expressed by memory studies scholars. Lovink writes, "Because of the speed of events, there is a real danger that an online phenomenon will already have disappeared before a critical discourse reflecting on it has had the time to mature and establish itself as institutionally recognized knowledge" (Lovink 2011, 8). In other words, if digital objects and practices do not remain accessible long enough to be thoroughly understood by the society that produces them, there may be no digital cultural memory at all. [...] Even as people increasingly use digital networks and platforms to create and archive cultural productions, the relationship between digital technologies and cultural memory is tenuous at best.

Archive Elves

→ IN *BREAK 2*,
BY ABIGAIL DE
KOSNIK.

The repertoire [...] of archive building demands a great deal of archivists' skill, time, and, in many cases, money (some archivists must add "fundraising" to the above list), but tends to go unnoticed or misunderstood by archive users. Some users mistake hacker/pirate/amateur/fan-run archives for corporate-funded and corporate-developed sites—thinking there is no difference between, for instance, the Archive of Our Own (AO3) and Tumblr, both of which host enormous amounts of fan activity, but only one of which (Tumblr) is a for-profit business with engineers on staff—and they assume that a well-paid full-time team is constantly available to provide them with technical support and service. Some users know that teams of volunteers maintain some of the archives they use, and expect those volunteers to perform desired technical labor and fulfill user requests on demand. It is likely that a significant percentage of Internet users simply do not know for certain who or what creates or sustains the online platforms that they use every day, and do not know that there is a substantive difference between platforms owned and managed by corporations, governments, and endowed not-for-profit organizations, and platforms designed and run by hobbyists and not-for-profit organizations that must constantly solicit funds or pay out of pocket to stay operational.

Henry Jenkins suggests one reason that the work of networked infrastructure-building may seem opaque to the millions who regularly interact with the products of that labor: it is not online infrastructure, but online community, that excites and engages people. "The platform companies no doubt would love us to say that we are participating in their platforms; they talk about

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the Reddit community or the YouTube community. Yet I suspect in most cases, the participants do not understand themselves in these terms at all. The participants in the Archive of Our Own understand themselves as part of fandom" (Clark et al. 2014, 1465–1466), rather than as part of a platform, Jenkins argues.

This viewpoint aligns with [...] the importance that "community archives" have to their members: such archives provide resources with which individuals can form and strengthen their understandings of their identities, and experience a sense of common identity with others. The details of infrastructure ownership and support may matter little to community archive users.

What looms large for users is that online resources allow them to find one another, and to feel a connection with one another. Archives provide this connection through giving members of a community a sense of shared culture.

What makes those resources appear and what keeps them going are questions that may simply not occur to most people who take part in online communities. Even in the case of AO3, which was formed explicitly by fans to be a fan-owned platform, members and visitors who were not part of the early days of AO3's organization may be ignorant of the archive's origins and mission, and how deeply its founders felt the need to create an online space for fans over which no corporate interest could have control.

Other factors contribute to users' lack of awareness of network *work*. Sociologist Mauricio Lazzarato first proposed the term "immaterial labor" in 1996 (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri [2000] adopted and popularized the term in their book *Empire*) to describe, Lazzarato states, "the changes taking place in workers' labor processes … where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication)" (Lazzarato 1996, 133). Lazzarato also glosses immaterial labor as "the activity that produces the 'cultural content' of the commodity," consisting of "a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work'—in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion" (133). By offering dual definitions of immaterial labor, Lazzarato attempts to account for both the apparent "immateriality" of digital work itself, the seeming nonphysicality (putting aside issues of hardware performance and ergonomics) of creating infrastructure and communicating with and via computers, and the "immateriality" of the Internet content created by cultural workers, most of whom produce this content voluntarily and during their "leisure" time, not under the rubric of "work." Part of Lazzarato's project is to emphasize that labor that appears to lack three-dimensional form or that seems largely divorced from physical expenditure is nevertheless real work. But the very "immateriality" of digital archival labor brackets it off from perception, making it seem either nonexistent (the user does not ask "Who or what makes this infrastructure possible?") or not-work (the user thinks that creating online cultural infrastructure is only fun and recreation for the creators). [...]

In theater studies, a similar language is sometimes used to describe crew members who labor backstage: Alice Rayner (2006) calls these workers "the ghosts of theatre" (148) and "ghosts behind the curtains" (137), who make possible the "hallucinations of the onstage world" (142). [...] Something about the intangibility and invisibility of Internet infrastructuring calls to mind the image of crewmembers shuffling around in the near-dark; both kinds of workers create the conditions for entertainment without being seen. Digital archivists do much of their work at the "back end" of archives, as technical theater workers operate backstage; the public that interacts with the "front end" of archives does not, and is not meant to, see and understand all of what transpires at the back end, just as the public that watches a play unfold onstage does not, and is not meant to, see and understand all of what transpires backstage. Digital archivists want users' experiences of their archives to seem smooth and frictionless. [...]

The smoothness of platform use to which the majority of platform designers aspire requires the erasure of all traces of the designers' labor.

So, both archivists and users wish for digital archives to work as if by magic. It is no wonder, then, that the effort of archivists goes unnoticed by archive users: the nature of online infrastructuring is such that the infrastructure builders aim to make themselves and their work invisible, ghostly, and immaterial. If using a networked digital archive feels like using a magic memory machine, this is in part because both the server that stores data and serves it up on command, and the *servers* (archivists) who serve the archive users (on demand) and maintain the integrity of the archive, are concealed from the user's view. [...]

The comparison between digital labor and theatrical labor also helps to reveal what we might call the *nested* aspect of immaterial labor: performance artists and actors, like fan writers and other members of online communities who provide immaterial labor, most often at the fringes of mainstream society, themselves depend on large networks of people to allow their marginalized operations to transpire and come to fruition. Rayner (2006, ix– xxxv) refers to this nested aspect of immaterial work as the "double" of artmaking; Jackson (2011, 177), describing performance art events, states that however "immaterial" these events may seem, they "still need a certain kind of technical labor in order to exist." Fans who create digital works in (as John Fiske put it) the "shadow" of official cultural texts rely on teams of technically skilled people to publish, distribute, and preserve their creations, who operate in the shadow of the fan creators. Immaterial laborers do not work on their own, but within networks of production.

Like technical theater workers, rogue digital archivists do not typically labor in the hopes of generating tremendous profits, either for themselves individually or for the larger organization (the archive) that they support, so they are not quite the "netslaves" that Terranova (2004) discusses in *Network Culture*, the volunteer/intern moderators and Web designers recruited by large Internet companies whose free labor allows publicly traded firms to multiply their stock valuation (73–80). [...] Nevertheless, there can be a pernicious tendency for everyone who benefits from the creative and technical labor of back-end/backstage workers to *undervalue* that labor, by regarding the workers as simply part of the machinery of production, as robots who serve.

[...] [A]rchivists' efforts to match or better the usability of commercial websites, and to maintain a professional demeanor at all times, likely encourages archive users to misinterpret their moments of being overwhelmed as technological glitches.

When users of digital archives conflate the mechanical servers and the human servers, they participate in what Georg Lukács called "reification" (which Christian Fuchs notes is "a reformulation of Marx's [1867] concept of fetishism" [Fuchs 2012a, 697]). In a process of reification, "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (Lukács [1923] 1971, 83). The relation between users and archivists can take on the character of a thing—a memory machine—and the reification of the idea of fully automated digital cultural memory obscures the fact that digital cultural memory does not have any rational "objectivity," but is a nascent concept in flux, being unevenly realized through relations between people, in the work that archive builders do for archive users and the constant negotiating that takes place between the two groups.

The states and quasi-state entities that sponsored the founding of archives during the print era desired those archives' reification; they benefited from archives being taken for truth-collecting and truth-producing machines, for then narratives of state power, control, and hegemony were supported by the totality of documents preserved, and were therefore

unquestionable. “It could never have been otherwise,” announce archives of the state. But archiving in the digital era is not coupled with state power in the same way, and it does not need to reinforce existing hegemonic structures to the same degree.

Therefore, the current generation would be remiss to reify archives, to mistake them for machines whose operations are concealed and secret to a large degree, and to again forget that humans in relation to one another produce cultural memory. If users can perceive the human labor that undergirds digital cultural memory, then they can continue to question what that memory is and what it should be, what narratives it does or should support, and what power structures it endorses, questions, or facilitates.

Archives as Counterinstitutions

→ IN *QUEER AND FEMINIST ARCHIVAL CULTURES*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

One of the greatest political potentials of rogue digital archives is that groups that have occupied the margins of "mainstream" society, and have consequently been largely marginalized by traditional memory institutions, can build their own robust cultural memory sites, as something like counterinstitutions, akin to the "counternarratives" told by postcolonial, ethnic, and feminist writers who archontically rewrite the stories of dominant culture [..]. Rogue archives transform "the museum," "the library," and "the archive," which have long supported, and been supported by, the state or private capitalists, into supportive infrastructure for groups whose histories and cultures are constantly in danger of being overwritten, forgotten, deleted, or relegated to dark corners by the guardians of "official" history and culture.

In myriad ways, Internet fan fiction archives serve as critically important community archives for female and queer cultural creativity. Because [...] fan fiction archives are sites in which women and girls can feel that they are participating in a tradition of female writing and reading, and can experience a sense of safety in numbers. In addition, fan archives are queer archives, in part because of the volume of stories located on these sites that are about male/male, female/female, and other romantic and sexual (and also, aromantic and asexual) pairings and groupings that diverge from the social norm of male/female coupling, and in part because of the large number of self-identified queer fans who use these sites, but also because fan archives facilitate numerous acts of representation and communication that exceed the bounds of heternonormativity.

The Emotional Power of Archives

→ IN *QUEER AND FEMINIST ARCHIVAL CULTURES*, BY ABIGAIL DE KOSNIK.

One of the primary motives of community archivists, especially those that aim to collect, preserve, and make accessible the texts and ephemera of people who have been structurally denied social and/or political power, is to incite positive feelings in those who identify as members of those marginalized groups. Writes Joan Nestle (1990), a founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), “One of our battles was to change secrecy into disclosure, shame into memory” (90). Theorists of archives, taking into account the wave of community archiving that has grown steadily since the 1970s, also stress the importance of the feelings produced in those whose documents are archived, and those who access those documents through the archives.

Achille Mbembe (2002) states that the archive “is supposed to belong to everyone. The community of time, the feeling according to which we would all be heirs to a time over which we might exercise the rights of collective ownership: this is the imaginary that the archive seeks to disseminate”(21).

Jeanette Bastian (2003), in her study of the archives of the Virgin Islands, writes, “The development of bodies of records preserved and valued by communities over time suggests that the keeping of archives goes beyond the need to account for the past and speaks to other felt needs within the communities themselves, the primary one being that of a community (or national) identity.” Bastian calls for “recognition of the profound emotional as well as historical value of records” to the identity building of groups, such as former colonies, whose identity is in question (Bastian 2003, 6).

In *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich makes a strong case for the importance of archives’ emotional effects, and for archives that store emotions. Cvetkovich (2003) describes “the profoundly affective power of a useful archive, especially an archive of sexuality and gay and lesbian life, which must preserve and produce not just knowledge but feeling” (241). Cvetkovich’s concept of “an archive of feelings” refers to a multisited queer archive—one composed not just of brick-and-mortar community archives such as the LHA but also of cultural texts “as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception” (7)—and this broad archive, a version of which Cvetkovich assembles in her book, not only evokes feelings of identification and compassion in its users but serves to record and communicate queer feelings as well, that is, “the many forms of love, rage, intimacy, grief, shame, and more that are part of the vibrancy of queer cultures” (7).

Nestle, Mbembe, Bastian, and Cvetkovich all describe ways that community archives are heavily charged with affect, and that a successful archive, a “useful archive,” in Cvetkovich’s phrasing, incites powerful emotions in their users. The emotions that these theorists imagine community archives instilling include: the feeling that one belongs to a collective and is therefore not alone *in her feelings*, in whatever feelings that common positionality or identity incites in her; the feeling that the history of one’s group warrants remembering, and that the social memory or collective memory of that group is deserving of being sustained and passed on; and the feeling that, if institutional and official archives ignore, or fail to recognize, the value of the group’s documents, that the group itself does honor and treasure those documents. “The very existence of these independent archives provide evidence of just how much has been excluded [from official archives] and the professional practice [of archiving] that has been responsible for such exclusions,” state Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens (2009, 17).

The excitement, recognition, and belonging that fans feel when initially encountering fic archives are the very feelings that archivists and theorists claim are the intended affects imparted by community archives. Nestle writes about how the LHA has fought to "change secrecy into disclosure"; this phrase describes exceedingly well what Lothian and Nelson went through when they realized that their secret habits of archontic production did not have to be secret any longer, but could be shared with others—perhaps becoming a collective secret practice instead of a solitary one. [...]

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QUEER.ARCHIVE.WORK 2, 1923 Internet Archive Edition

→ BY PAUL SOULELLIS.

We usually think about archives as places of abundance. Deep, rich sites that house a multitude of perspectives. This can certainly be true, but archives are also sites of erasure, allowing some voices or perspectives to be minimized and excluded when they don't fit into normative narratives.

Traditionally, stories involving people of color, queer people, and other historically-marginalized voices have been left out of archives, or diminished, because of ignorance, homophobia, and racism. Histories aren't "discovered" in archives; rather, we use archives to actively con-struct versions of history, stories that accommodate our own subjective positions and ideologies. All too frequently, these stories favor the familiar structures of oppressive power—whiteness, patriarchy, and capitalism. [...]

What can be done? It's crucial that we carefully examine our archives and search for lost voices, stories of failure, non-linear trajectories, and other non-conventional perspectives. We must refuse to accept traditional timelines at face value, and work to amplify marginalized material that has otherwise gone unnoticed, or erased. When confronting an archive or any presentation of historic cultural material, it's irresponsible not to ask urgent questions like: What forces shaped this? Who was excluded? Who else should be included here in order to better understand the material at hand? Once engaged, we can actively work to change the shape of history, giving it dimension and depth and greater representation for all who were involved. This is what I've been calling queer archive work.

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