

**DIGITAL MEMORY:
HISTORIOGRAPHIC PRACTICE AND
CURATED VIRTUAL ARCHIVES**

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg—Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

INTRODUCTION: TWO ENDS OF A SPECTRUM

THE MYSPACE PROBLEM: TOTAL DIGITAL LOSS



THE JAMES GUNN PROBLEM: TOTAL DIGITAL PERMANENCE





**WHO DECIDES WHAT IS
REMEMBERED AND WHAT IS
FORGOTTEN?**

SEEKING A MODEL FOR ETHICAL DIGITAL PRESERVATION

- Feminist historiography provides insights into navigating digital memory
- Physical archival methods can be adapted to digital archival practice
- Major concerns are preserving marginalized voices and agency

THE ARGUMENT FOR FORGETTING

- Viktor Mayer-Schonberger: *Delete* (2009)
- Privacy, data preservation, and memory
- Perfect recall prevents living fully in the present
- Solution: Expiration Dates for digital data

THE PROBLEM WITH FORGETTING

- Homogenization of digital space
- Internet as a complex networked space
- Forgetting as a necessity means we need to consider what is being forgotten, and by whom

RHETORICAL ARCHIVAL PRACTICE

- Archive as a “repository holding documents or other rare material, usually those of historical or rare value” (Fowler in Gaillet 2010).
- Reframing archival practice to seek new methods of curation
- Glenn and Enoch (2009) - revised research practices, uncover histories of underrepresented groups, provide lived experience as framing

IDENTITY AND THE ARCHIVES

- Declaration of identity - creates nuance and context
- Shaping archival spaces
- Refining collections concerning minority groups
- Redefine the archive through curation

DIGITAL PRESERVATION: ADAPTING THE PHYSICAL

- Same questions being asked in physical archival practice, just a grander scale
- Ramsey (2010) - assumptions about archival access
- Three major kinds of archive:
 - Hidden
 - Partially hidden/processed
 - Visible

Selectivity
Cross-referencing
Categorization
Closure

- K. Tirabassi (2010)

CURATION IN A DIGITAL SPACE

- Davis (2016) - curation and personal judgement in digital spaces
- Curation and identity
- The decisions rest upon the individual
- Curation helps both individuals and archivists on a larger scale



CURATION, SELECTIVITY, AND DIGITAL 'PERMANENCE'

- Selectivity principle - is it ethical?
- Digital media: “Degenerable, forgetful, erasable” (Chun 2008).
- Minority experiences marked “inconsequential” and escape notice of historians (DeHertogh 2018).
- Physical and Digital archival practice must consider **curation, categorization, usability**

MOVING FORWARD: ETHICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

- Human element of archiving and curation
- (Im)permanence of digital spaces
- Privilege of forgetting and access of information
- Rhetorical archival practice: interpretation of existing archives AND curation of new ethically mindful archives

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