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Archives, Models, and Methods for Critical Approaches to Identities: Representing Race
and Ethnicity in the Digital Humanities

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Information Studies

by

David J. Kim

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Archives, Models, and Methods for Critical Approaches to Identities: Representing Race
and Ethnicity in the Digital Humanities

By

David J. Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Johanna R. Drucker, Chair

This dissertation addresses the cultural politics of representation in digital archives of various histories of racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. It critiques the discourse of realism in both digital and archival representations of knowledge about minoritarian identities through case studies that explore the possibilities and the limitations of digital tools and platforms for the minoritarian critique of *the archive* as the all-encompassing site of knowledge. The first case study presents a digital 3D model of an East Los Angeles public housing complex famous for its numerous murals painted during the Chicana/o movement of the 1970s. Informed by the theorizations of identity formations as spatial practices, the 3D model functions as an immersive digital archive that documents the dialectics of the *barrio* as represented by the murals. The second case study reimagines the archive of Edward S. Curtis's *The North American Indian* (1907-1930), an influential yet controversial ethnographical work on the Native Americans in

the early twentieth century. It critiques the essentialism of this extensive work of photographic documentation by exploring the multi-modality and non-linearity of Scalar, a content management system developed by digital humanists, and through experimental network visualizations that expose the racial logic and the socio-cultural context of *The North American Indian*. The following chapter analyzes the discussions around race and ethnicity in the *Library of Congress Flickr Commons* project as an example of the current Archives 2.0 movement. It challenges the notion that user participation in social media platforms of archival institutions signifies progress towards democracy, and argues that Archives 2.0 is rather more useful as evidence of the mutually constitutive nature of the familiar binary of history/memory. The closing discussion unpacks the rhetorical dimensions of the data and the map of *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930*. It discusses the epistemological consequences of the project's reliance on mostly legal records to create an extensive database meant to portray the "everyday life" of the Harlem Renaissance. Throughout these sections, by moving away from the multiculturalist celebration of diversity, this dissertation seeks beyond the minority's inclusion into *the archive*, in order to imagine new modes of representing difference in the current moment of the "digital archive fever."

The dissertation of David J. Kim is approved.

Jean-François Blanchette

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Alan Liu

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2015

Dedicated to my sister, Julia Kim.

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Monash Univeristy Press (forthcoming).

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Participation, and Responsibility in the Ethnic Archive.” *Archive Journal*, no. 4

(2014). <http://www.archivejournal.net/issue/4/archives-remixed/performing-archive-identity-participation-and-responsibility-in-the-ethnic-archive/>.

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CHAPTER 1

The “Ethnic Archive” and the Critique of Realism

General Introduction: Digital Archive Fever

Along with the cultural, economic and political shifts accrued by the emergence and widespread implementation of digital technologies for archives, the last few decades have meant mass digital migration of physical, on-site materials; preservation of born-digital materials; and the development of new standards and practices. Many of these changes have been developed to maintain the established best practices for the preservation and access of archival materials in the pre-digital era. Encoded Archival Description (EAD) developed by the Society of American Archivists, for example, is the adoption of the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format specified for the creation of machine-readable finding aids, the paper document that has served as the primary access point for archival holdings for researchers. The fundamental shift from the flat database to the relational database in managing digital assets has also resulted in the establishment of much more flexible metadata schema, allowing digital collections across institutions to become networked and more widely accessible.

But this drastic shift in technological infrastructure alone does not fully account for the extent to which the archive has become such a generative term outside of the archival profession. As many archivists, digital humanists and other stakeholders situated at the intersection of digital technology and cultural heritage have expressed, there has been a “striking growth of interest in the concept of archives outside of library

and archival communities.”¹ For the most part, the heightened attention to the archives in both public and academic discourse has had very little to do with those changes specific to the archival profession. At the risk of rehearsing the familiar rhetoric of the “user’s empowerment,” one may argue that the lower threshold of producing content through widely used content management systems (CMS) and the tools of digital audio/video media have had the effect of vernacularizing, so to speak, once daunting endeavors, such as making of one’s own archives. Many digital forms of knowledge and expression that are no more than blogs or websites, scholarly or not, make claims such as “this is an archive of” and “my thoughts are archived in.” Driven by the archive’s fundamental precepts of *preservation* and *access*, what is considered archivable and archive-worthy now includes social media, video games and codes—all understood to be important part of the cultural legacy of the near past and the present moment. The current digital archive fever describes both the shift in form and content of what the archive now entails.

Digital archive fever, or how archives have become vernacular through digital means of production and consumption, is not only about what an archive is now, but also, perhaps more to the point, about who makes archives and for what purpose.² No longer does Michel Foucault’s often-quoted statement, “archive is the first the law of what can be said” feel applicable (when taken only in its restrictive sense) to the various archival endeavors in digital culture.³ Rather, it seems the archive, digitally reimaged by

¹ Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines,” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 9.

² Matthew G. Kirschenbaum has used the term “digital archive fever” to refer to the archiving of born-digital materials: see, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, “Digital Humanities Archive Fever,” 2011, <https://mkirschenbaum.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/digital-humanities-archive-fever/>.

³ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 129.

researchers and cultural institutions, which is the focus of this project, functions as a project of optimism and in service of infinite scholarly outcomes. Nowhere is this more evident than in the archival field itself (both archival studies/science and the archival profession), whose response to the archive's loss of specificity and standards in digital culture could have also easily been asserting more of its traditional values and technical expertise to adjudicate what is and what is not an archive. Likewise, no one in the digital humanities has developed a digital archive with the intention that it will function as a locked cell, as "the law" for future research, or as the site that obstructs other interpretative possibilities. Because of the increasing accessibility of digitized sources as well as the availability of digital tools and platforms that facilitate the creation of one's own archive, digital archives have become one of the main activities under the big tent of the digital humanities. Along with the considerations of collaborative archival projects in digital pedagogy discussions, the literary and textual studies of the digital humanities, in particular, have been very active in exploring how digital forms afford (re)reading of canonical works by Shakespeare, Walt Whitman and William Blake, to name a few.

Of course, much of this digital archive fever is also reflective the current technoutopianism. But, just as blind subscription to the "archival promises of the digital" is unproductive in this moment in which critical analysis of the relationship between technology and knowledge production seems crucial, so is the broad dismissal of the opportunities and challenges engaged by such enthusiasm for different possibilities for digital archives.⁴ In this regard, I find it significant that what has become familiar in archival studies as "postmodern archival theory," which has radically opened up the field

⁴ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 148–71.

to community archives movement, postcolonial archival theory, human rights archives and other archives-as-activism endeavors in the past few decades, has coincided with the calls to embrace emerging digital technologies, which together has identified broadly the *democratization* of the archives as the stakes of the matter. As I argue below and throughout subsequent chapters, the democratization of the archival field in North America has been dominated by the multiculturalist notion of diversity and inclusion in its considerations of cultural differences along the categories of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The nexus of the newly invested agency on the part of the archivists to create more inclusive archives and the digital technologies' capacity to deliver on that aspiration has often rested upon the extent to which this new *interventionist* archival paradigm, both ideologically and technologically, accommodates those “minoritarian” histories and voices that have been largely silenced in the previous archival era.⁵ Similarly in the digital humanities, along with the consideration of social media and other sites of alternative forms of knowledge production, the digital archive functions as a site where the issues of diversity and difference of the field are contested. However, the discussions around the interdisciplinarity of digital humanities' methodological experimentations, which I argue have been the crux of the field, have largely taken place apart from those conversations around diversity in the area of scholarly communications and cultural criticism in the mode of new media studies.

To state the most broad entry point for this project: the digital archive is fundamentally a cultural formation, not only a set of technical specifications onto which values are inscribed and from which emergent discourse and new practices take shape.

⁵ I use the adjective “minoritarian” as opposed to “minority,” as many others have done, to more accurately reflect the longstanding critique of the ontological framework of conceptualizing identities.

More specifically in the scholarly context of criticism and interpretation, the digital archive represents a “knowledge model,” as I discuss below, containing familiar norms and modes yet amenable to various critical frameworks and priorities. I demonstrate through the discussions of various digital archives of my own initiative, as well as through the close readings of digital archives created by others, that the sustained critique of the archive from various “identity studies” in recent years helps us to unpack the digital archive in its relationship to the epistemology of cultural difference in the U.S. beyond the still necessary yet limiting framework of diversity and inclusion. This project explores, through the case studies of “minoritarian archives,” the opportunities for bridging the two discourses around diversity—representative diversity and methodological diversity—in the digital humanities, not as a model for presenting better or more accurate versions of various minoritarian histories, but rather, for conceptualizing epistemological difference that those histories instantiate. For this project, this involves seeking out new critical frameworks from critical race and ethnic studies on the archives (post- Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault), not as departures from their framings but as specified extensions, in order to unpack those sites of intersections where the issues pertaining to archives and those of identity formations converge. In conjunction with this critical reorientation, this project centrally involves experimentations with emerging digital tools and methods and applying them as a part of new digital archival models for imagining new digital forms of minoritarian histories and understanding the cultural politics of representation therein.

My thinking about methodological experimentations with form derives from a particular vantage point of the digital humanities. Although I do not subscribe to the

division between “builders” and “thinkers” as some have suggested, I do believe that thinking through building is the disciplinary commitment active in both archival studies and the digital humanities—a disciplinary commitment that has the potential to not only implement the new tools of the trade, but to also to critically evaluate the terms of those implementations. In doing so, the research questions of this project are two-fold: 1) to critique the ways in which “ethnographic realism” animates minoritarian digital archive endeavors; and 2) to experiment with the affordances of emerging digital tools and methods in order to imagine new archival modes of representing critical analysis of race and ethnicity. Fundamentally a methodology-oriented analysis, this project identifies both the limits and the possibilities of archival modeling, throughout which the core challenge remains: Can digital archives function as post-positivist knowledge form, grinding against the fundamentally positivist notions of evidence and documentation that have been the archival mode of knowing?

Motivation: Asian American Arts Centre Archive⁶

My thinking about digital archives in its relationship to identity discourse began with my involvement with the development of the digital archive of Asian American Arts Centre (AAAC) in 2005-2009. Funded by the Lower Manhattan Development Council (LMCC) in its effort to revitalize non-profit organizations in the area directly impacted by the events of September 11, 2001, the project entailed the digital preservation and access of its archives composed of image slides, exhibition catalogs, artist statements and other

⁶ “Artasiamerica,” *A Digital Archive of Asian/Asian American Contemporary Art History*, 2012, <http://www.artasiamerica.org/>.

materials that document the organization's history since its founding in 1974 in New York's Chinatown.

My familiarity with the organization, the founding director and curator Robert Lee, and the history of Asian American community activism and cultural production in the New York City area, played a pivotal role in my capacity as consultant for information design and archival processing. The most productive and challenging aspect of about the process from our initial conversation was the recognition of the limitations of the identity category of "Asian American" even though all of the organization's activities had close relations to that category. As Lee describes, "from the beginning we envisioned the term 'Asian American' to be flexible and fluid, especially as a visual art organization, not a historical organization."⁷ Furthermore, he asks "If the question is who or what is Asian American, then what is Asian American art? Does it automatically mean works created by artists of Asian descent in the U.S.? Does it have to explicitly address Asian American issues? Can it also include works by non-Asian American artist that take on those issues? What about those artists who reject the label of Asian American but have exhibited their work here in the past?"⁸

First, as with all efforts to digitize collections, this project began with the assessment of the physical materials and the selection of materials to be digitized and represented in the digital archive, which would form some kind of recognizable order and coherence. This process is known as "archival appraisal," which is the

⁷ Robert Lee, in discussion with author, October 2007.

⁸ Ibid.

process of determining whether records and other materials have permanent (archival) value. Appraisal may be done at the collection, creator, series, file, or item level. The basis of appraisal decisions may include a number of factors, including the records' provenance and content, their authenticity and reliability, their order and completeness, their condition and costs to preserve them, and their intrinsic value. Appraisal often takes place within a larger institutional collecting policy and mission statement.⁹

This process further breaks down to macro- and micro-appraisal, through which the archivist assesses the broader parameters of the archive (organization history, for example) as well as the narrower scope (artists and their individual works). As evident in this description, archival appraisal is a highly subjective process to say the least, and even more so when the archivist, in this case the director and curator, begins with a rather uneasy relationship to both terms that define this project: “Asian American” and “art history.” The end result is not an authoritatively art historical, disciplinarily speaking, account of Asian American contemporary art.¹⁰ Instead, the appraisal prioritized narrating the history of the organization itself through these artists and their works. As Lee observes, “how this archive is significant to Asian American art history and Asian

⁹ Richard Pearce-Moses, “Arrangement,” *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, 2005, <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/appraisal>.

¹⁰ The statement in the digital archive makes clear that this is an archive focused on representing the history of the organization, as opposed to that of the field of Asian American art history: “Launched in summer 2009, its main emphasis for the next few years will continue to be artists participating in Asian American Arts Centre (AAAC) exhibition program in New York City since 1983 to the present. Artists who have been key for AAAC in exemplifying the subject of Asian American art and the issues that embody the question of diversity in America during the past 60 years are priority for the selection process.” <http://artasiaamerica.org/about>

American community will have to be judged by others who are interested in creating that history. I am sure that many art historians and critics have not heard of many artists that I've selected, but their prominence in the art world is not the main focus."¹¹ In other words, he defers the epistemological claim that his community-based organization can accurately stand in either for the broader Asian American identity or for official art historical account of Asian American art.¹²

The second set of tasks was archival description, which crucially involves descriptive metadata. Part of my responsibility was to evaluate existing standards created specifically for visual resources, mainly Catalogue Description for Works of Art (CDWA) developed by the Getty Institute, and the Visual Resources Association Core (VRA) currently in use by prominent resources such as ArtStor. Descriptive metadata also involved exploring terms in Art and Architecture Thesauri (AAT) as well as Union List of Artist Names, both developed by the Getty Institute in order facilitate consistent designation of terms across collections in various institutions. Lee and I realized that the dictates of the terms in these standards did not correspond to the project's aspirations towards building on the "flexibility and fluidity" of Asian American identity. The metadata fields such as "Nationality" and "Country of Origin" as the main indicators of the artist's cultural location simply do not account for those hybrid identities and transnational identities that the Arts Centre had in mind since its founding. Also the

¹¹ Robert Lee, in discussion with author, October 2007.

¹² For Asian American art history, see Melissa Chiu, Karin M. Higa, and Susette S. Min, *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now* (New Haven: Asia Society with Yale University Press, 2006); Alexandra Chang, *Envisioning Diaspora: Asian American Visual Arts Collectives from Godzilla, Godzookie to the Barnstormers* (Beijing: Timezone 8 Editions, 2009); Gordon H. Chang et al., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850-1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk, Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Union List, unsurprisingly, does not include most of the artists that Lee has worked with over the years. The tentative solution was to defer to the artists' statements for how they have self-identified their cultural/national identity or heritage and populate the field with multiple entries. Thus, some artists are identified as both "Asian American" and "Chinese," for example, while others indicate only "Taiwanese."

Other means of reflecting the organization's commitment to "fluidity and flexibility" include liberally applying local subject headings alongside of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and AAT to account for the range of subject matter not included in such controlled vocabulary lists. The end result adheres to a form that is easily recognizable as a digital archive *despite* our effort to rethink some of the formal aspects of archives as I have just described: a collection of images and texts; access point and navigational paths; search terms; "about" and other meta-statements. But also, *because* of our effort to embed the curator's fundamental critique of identity categories in and through common archival practices, this digital archive suffers in certain usability aspects, most clearly evident in the over-popularization of terms in "subject index" and "style/period index."¹³

As I describe in the following literature review, both the theoretical and technical challenges raised during the process of working with Robert Lee, a community figure who has been uniquely committed to the complexities of cultural representation even at the cost of clearer legibility, serve as the starting point for my effort in triangulating the fields of archival studies, digital humanities and identity studies. Specifically, this experience has allowed me to anticipate recent discussions and develop my own thinking

¹³ "ArtAsiaAmerica-Subject," accessed December 1, 2014, <http://artasiaamerica.org/search/browse/subject>

about: 1) the limitations and the possibilities of the “community archive model” and its conceptualization of “archival agency”; 2) the productive ambivalence of the relationship between the archive and minoritarian discourse; and 3) orientation away from the digital archive as resource and towards archive as a knowledge model.

Literature Review: Archival Models

In “More than a Fever: Toward a Theory of the Ethnic Archive,” Dana Williams and Marissa López introduce the collection of essays compiled for the “theories and methodologies” section of a recent issue of *PMLA* with a series of questions affirming the continuing urgency of the archive even after the “canon wars” of literary studies a few decades ago.¹⁴ Recognizing the foundational influence of Foucault, Derrida and Gayatri Spivak who have made familiar the notion that the archive is “a site of political authority” full of “gaps” and “silences,” Williams and López question whether the archival challenge in this present moment should remain the struggle for inclusion executed through the accumulation of materials that fill these gaps in our knowledge:

But the question we must now ask, one the more radical ethnic archive has consistently grappled with, is whether the principle goal should be simply to refigure the archive. Should scholars continue to recover and foreground artifacts that reveal indigenous knowledge, or should they reconsider the archive wholesale, questioning its politics and practices, and implement new practices and methodologies?¹⁵

¹⁴ Dana A. Williams and Marissa K. López, “More Than a Fever: Toward a Theory of the Ethnic Archive,” *PMLA* 127, no. 2 (2012): 357.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 357–358.

What is useful about the “More than a Fever” discussion for my project is that it seeks a starting point for ethnic archival theory other than Derrida, and that it argues not for a better archive inclusive of more ethnic voices but for different “archival methodologies.” As Williams and López argue, “because knowledge is perpetually translated, interpreted, and then mediated through power relations, archival methodologies must be organic; they must evolve along with their objects of inquiry.”¹⁶ While the difference between the ethnic literary archive and the canonical literary archive is important to maintain in the discussion below, I do want to explore a few productive connections to be drawn from the digital humanities’ theorization of the literary archives and how they are reflected in its application of digital tools and methods. Here I want to emphasize the difference between *archives* as actual form that are collections of things, and *the archive* as metaphor for power relations in knowledge production or some abstract universal archive that holds every knowledge.¹⁷ A part of my motivation for the gathering here of sometimes disparate archival analyses is to locate when and how the conjoining of *archives* and *the archive* is productive and when we should resist the conflation of the two despite their obvious idiomatic proximity. As the historian Carolyn Steedman argues, “the archive is thus inflated to mean—if not quite the everything—then at least all the ways and means of state power: Power itself, perhaps, rather than those quietly folded and filed documents that provide the mere and incomplete records of some of its

¹⁶ Ibid., 358.

¹⁷ Williams and López also express their apprehension about the term “the archive,” which is a part of their motivation for wanting a different starting point for the discussion than Derrida. As they state in a footnote, “We are using archive here, reluctantly, to represent repositories of world historical knowledge, though we are careful to note that the abstract use of the term is highly problematic, since the univocal naming of “the” archive as representative of a collective repository reinforces the amalgamation we are arguing against.” Ibid., 359.

inaugural moments.”¹⁸ Simply, my contention is that because *the archive*, as it has been theorized, encompasses all forms of knowledge production, *archives* as collections of things, in and of themselves, do not contribute much specificity in that consideration when the latter is already implicated in the former.¹⁹

Then how does the digital humanities enter, however indirectly, the discussion of the “ethnic archive?” Although the digital humanities has been largely concerned with canonical texts, as a field defined by methodological experimentation, it presents a body of work (and projects) that explores the possibilities in precisely the kinds of methodologies that “evolve along with their objects of inquiry” that Williams and López seek. As textual and digital humanities scholar Manuel Portela describes,

Projects of electronic editions and archives have given a new prominence to textual studies in the digital age. By increasingly supplementing the idea of edition with the idea of archive, a significant conceptual move in the representation of textuality has gradually asserted itself. Such recontextualisation of textual objects foregrounds their interconnectivity and cultural materiality. Digital archiving provides a new critical environment for examining both the genetic and the social text.²⁰

¹⁸ Carolyn Steedman, “Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1162.

¹⁹ She further adds that that inadequate translation also might be at work here in the reception of Derrida’s work in the U.S., particularly to historians: “To say the very least, if you read in English, without the insert and with the restricted, monovalent, archaic—and, because archaic, faintly comic—“fever” of the English translation rather than with “mal” (trouble, misfortune, pain, hurt, sickness, wrong, sin, badness, evil), you will read rather different than a reader of the French version.” *Ibid.*, 1163.

²⁰ Manuel Portela, “New Textualities,” *European Journal of English Studies* 11, no. 2 (2007): 125.

Although much can be said and theorized about the familiar pragmatic benefits of digital preservation and of the accessibility of digitized literary sources, Portela focuses on the active sense of “digital archiving,” to which the following examples provide much needed specificities as to how such endeavors have allowed scholars to perform interpretative acts in and through their deployments of various digital tools and methods. These discussions are also representative of the “building” vantage point of the digital humanities, whose methodological considerations are grounded in the experience of developing digital archives, not only using them for research.²¹ Thus, “archival methodology” in this context is more about “archiving,” rather than how to do archival research, which also has implications for how to theorize *the archive*, the digital equivalent for which is often the universalist conception of the “database.”

One of the most prominent examples of digital literary archive is *The William Blake Archive*.²² Arguably already a “multimodal” body of work, which includes text, drawings and engravings, Blake’s archive is perhaps already conducive to the type of experimentation with form that the digital humanities’ textual scholarship has long engaged. As Roger Whitson and Jason Whittaker describe the process of developing of the *Blake Archive*, the goal of this archive is not simply to replicate the originals, but rather the “application of new scholarly and pedagogical approaches to understanding Blake’s influence on contemporary media, approaches that can be found in the digital

²¹ More on “building,” see Stephen Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell, “Developing Things: Notes toward an Epistemology of Building in the Digital Humanities,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 75–84.

²² Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi, “The William Blake Archive,” 2014, <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/>.

humanities.”²³ Citing Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, they define the digital humanities as:

‘the notion that there is a clear and direct relationship between the interpretative strategies that humanists employ and the tools that facilitate exploration of original artifacts based on those interpretive strategies.’

DH offers a radical methodological challenge to traditional forms of humanities scholarship by employing new technologies to analyze sources in dramatically different ways.²⁴

For Whitson and Whittaker, Blake’s work itself, as the source material, provides the basis for critically engaging digital archives as a fundamentally “collaborative work,” locating opportunities for such in the “emergence of folksonomy and algorithmic editorial control and their part in archiving Blake on social site(s).”²⁵ Another example is the *Walt Whitman Archive*.²⁶ In his critique of the way Derrida’s “archive fever” is invoked in support of the claim the “archive is, in actuality or virtuality, a database,” Jerome McGann emphasizes how interpretative frameworks are embedded in the minutiae of “markup structure” and in the design of the “user interface.”²⁷ He argues that both the metaphor and the actual technicalities of the database cannot account for the complexity

²³ Roger Whitson and Jason Whittaker, *William Blake and the Digital Humanities: Collaboration, Participation, and Social Media* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ Ed Folsom and Kenneth Price M, “The Walt Whitman Archive,” accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/>.

²⁷ Jerome McGann, “Database, Interface, and Archival Fever,” *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (2007): 1588.

of the scholarly task of interpretation that it is materialized through the formal elements. Echoing similar emphasis on the difference between replication and interpretation, he states, “scholars do not edit or study self-identical texts. They reconstruct a complex documentary record of textual markings and remaking, in which their own scholarly investments directly participate.”²⁸

Recent works such as *Algorithmic Criticism* by Stephen Ramsay (2011) and *Macroanalysis* by Matthew Jockers (2013), both of which spring from Franco Moretti’s seminal *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (2007), attest to how the initial “computational turn” in the digital humanities has begun to more clearly articulate its value as the “critical turn,” which dispels the notion that machine processes and digital tools are independent of interpretations by the human agent, in this case the scholar who shapes and forms them according to one’s critical lens.²⁹ Echoing Schreibman, Siemens, and Unsworth’s emphasis on the “clear and direct relationship between the interpretative strategies and . . . tools that facilitate exploration,” Ramsay warns that “if text analysis is to participate in literary critical endeavor in some manner beyond fact-checking, it must endeavor to assist the critic in the unfolding of interpretative possibilities.”³⁰ These two interrelated areas of activities in the digital humanities—digital literary archives and text analysis—are situated within the broader methodological framework of “modeling”.

²⁸ Ibid., 1592.

²⁹ Stephen Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Matthew Lee Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London; New York: Verso, 2007).

³⁰ Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*, 10.

All of these discussions cite and add their own specificities to Willard McCarty's broader notion of "model" and "modeling." As he argues in his philological study of the concept of "modeling" as practiced in the sciences and its potential for humanities-oriented inquiry, "[the digital humanities] is an experimental practice, using equipment and instantiating definite methods, for the skilled application of which we need to know what we are doing as well as it can be known. I have labeled the core of this practice 'modeling.'"³¹ He further proposes the two interrelated concepts of "tractability," or "machine readability," and "manipulability," or the "capability of being handled, managed, and worked," as the core "effects of computing," or as I assume, effects of also other means of digital production of knowledge that are not directly about computational analysis. As I have described in the context of the AAAC's digital archive project, the strategies for handling the "nationality" field in metadata schema, as a simple example, demonstrates this point: the requirement of the field for the archive's database and the ways to customize how this field is applied according to this archive's understanding of cultural location in Asian American context.

The framework of "tractability" and "manipulability," taken a bit further, situates any exploration of digital tools and methods as composed of both limits and possibilities, moving away from the tendency to often focus on what is drastically new and advantageous about them. In this regard, Johanna Drucker's account of her collaborative and "speculative" digital projects sheds light on the epistemological stakes involved in the "modeling" of humanities-oriented scholarship in forms and methods that have been

³¹ Willard McCarty, "Modeling: A Study in Words and Meanings," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, eds. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

largely developed elsewhere under different epistemological traditions.³² The task is not to simply execute the dictates of digital forms that have been developed largely on the tradition of empiricism, but to practice the humanities' precept of "subjectivity" in and through those forms. First, she defines model as that which "creates a generalized schematic structure, while a representation is a stand-in or surrogate for some particular thing."³³ She further adds, "On the surface, a model seems static. In reality it is, like any 'form,' a provocation for a reading, an intervention, an interpretive act."³⁴ The crucial difference between the epistemological tradition of "mathesis" and "aesthesis" provides the overarching thesis for these discussions, but each of her case studies, as they are situated in different disciplinary contexts with their own set of critical priorities in dealing with various source materials, demonstrates the relationship between the various models of knowledge and the ways in which the central concept of subjectivity manipulates the conventions of these models to make interpretative performances not only tractable but also generative as critiques of these conventions. As I describe below, her distinction between "model" and "representation" becomes useful for critiquing how many ethnic digital archives have invested in the term "representation" to establish a positivist relationship between the archives and the minoritarian histories documented in them.

Following from these discussions on modeling and methodology, I propose that the digital archive is also a recognizable form, with a set of familiar conventions that

³² Johanna Drucker, *Speclab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³³ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

combine the traditional elements of documentation and record keeping as well as those of web design. They contain descriptive metadata, digitized resources of various media types, access points granted by interface design, exhibits as primary narrative structure, and some level of overarching containment of content. As a model, however, each digital archive also contains specific *epistemological* presuppositions that are distributed throughout its various design elements. In the context of the archival field's engagement with minoritarian discourse, the shift in the last few decades — from the traditional archival paradigm that operates from the objective and neutral custodianship of historical records to one that understands archiving as a subjective and contingent process — has meant a radical diversification of both the archivist profession and the histories it actively documents.³⁵ This shift is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the contrast between the “diplomats model” and the “community archives model” in their principles and practices, which are ultimately about their differences in how each understands the archives' relationship to epistemology. These differences can be framed more broadly as archival science and archival studies, the latter of which has been impacted by the move towards interdisciplinarity that draws largely from those fields that directly contend with the cultural politics of identity in the United States.

According to Luciana Duranti, the most prominent voice of the diplomats model, “at the core of diplomats lies the idea that all records can be analyzed, understood, and evaluated in terms of a system of formal elements that are universal in their application and decontextualized in nature.”³⁶ The Diplomats has been influential

³⁵ Dominique Daniel and Amalia S. Levi, eds., *Identity Palimpsests: Archiving Ethnicity in the U.S. and Canada* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014).

³⁶ Luciana Duranti, “The Archival Bond,” *Archives and Museum Informatics* 11, no. 3 (1997): 215.

in the more scientific analysis of electronic and digital archives, contributing to the important issue of establishing standards by which the field can continue to adjudicate, if rather too strictly, the authenticity of records.³⁷ Because electronic and digital records pose significant challenges for the archivists' attempt to validate their authenticity, diplomatics draws from legal theory and forensics to more accurate and manageable archival practice in light of the significant difficulty for authentication in electronic records environments, as most recently addressed by Jean-François Blanchette in *Burdens of Proof* (2012).³⁸ This approach certainly reflects the archival field's longstanding investment in evidence, as Anne Gilliland-Swetland states in her consideration of the impact of digital technologies for archives:

The archival perspective brings an evidence-based approach to the management of recorded knowledge. It is fundamentally concerned with the organizational and personal process and context through which records and knowledge are created as well as the ways in which records individually and collectively reflect those processes.³⁹

The critique of this model, however, has been that it explicitly calls for “universal” and “decontextualized” understanding of evidence in order to establish archival standards and practices that are more objectively accurate as well as efficient, as opposed to Gilliland-

³⁷ Diplomatics theory has generated many evaluative studies of the authenticity and the integrity of electronic records. See, Luciana Duranti, and Heather MacNeil, “The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records: an Overview of the UBC-MAS Research.” *Archivaria* 42 (1996): 46-67.

³⁸ Jean-François Blanchette, *Burdens of Proof: Cryptographic Culture and Evidence Law in the Age of Electronic Documents* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

³⁹ Anne Gilliland-Swetland, *Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: The Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000), v.

Swetland's emphasis on "process and context," even as she maintains "evidence" as the field's main focus. Echoing this statement, Heather MacNeil argues that the "current limitations are attributable mainly to the excessive truth-value accorded to the archival-diplomatic model [...]. The means suggested to overcome the current limitations of the model and to extend its depth and breadth focus on situating the model within a more interpretive and contextualist framework for electronic record-keeping environments."⁴⁰

If the Diplomatics model suggests the relevance of the longstanding question in archival science, "what is a record?", the recent expansion of the field through its interdisciplinary considerations has been asking various questions relating to the "who" of the record.⁴¹ Even as archival studies continues to acknowledge the normative necessity of objective evidence, it has also challenged the illusion of "truth-value" as self-evident in records. Reflective of the broader influence of critical theory in other disciplines, the archival field's attention to "process and context" has activated reconsiderations of its assumptions and practices by turning to various theorizations of power relations, namely those by Foucault and Derrida for their explicit invocation of the term *the archive*, as I have described above. This turn towards more discursive understanding of archival practices has become familiar in the field as "postmodern archival theory," which is foundational to the development of what I broadly refer to as "interventionist" archival practices. Terry Cook outlines the "postmodern archival paradigm" as:

⁴⁰ Heather MacNeil, "Contemporary Archival Diplomatics as a Method of Inquiry: Lessons Learned from Two Research Projects," *Archival Science* 4, no. 3 (2004): 231-232.

⁴¹ For a historical overview of this line of inquiry, see Geoffrey Yeo, "Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects," *American Archivist* 71 (2008): 118-143.

Process rather than product, becoming rather than being, dynamic rather static, context rather than text, reflecting time and place rather than universal absolutes — these have become the postmodern watchwords for analyzing and understanding science, society, organizations, and business activity, among others. They should likewise become the watchwords for archival science in the new century, and thus the foundation for a new conceptual paradigm for the profession.”⁴²

Rethinking the archival paradigm in contrast with the positivist positions espoused by the diplomatics theory, postmodern archival theory has provoked new areas of research that prioritize the analysis of the meta-narratives, or the “tacit narratives” in the archive that reveals the contingencies of the archive’s epistemic authority.⁴³ Through a series of position papers that broadly argues for the “pluralization” of the archival curriculum and research, Gilliland-Swetland and others have launched what amounts to discursive readings of archives and archival processes, generating questions around the archive’s institutional status as well its evidential authority, most prominently in regards to understanding cultural differences.⁴⁴

The most relevant aspects of this paradigm shift in archival studies for this project are the developments in community archiving and the transnational perspectives on the

⁴² Terry Cook, “Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts,” *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (2001): 24.

⁴³ Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (2001): 131–41. For a related discussion, see Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” *American Archivist* 65 (2002): 24-41.

⁴⁴ For the overview of the current archival research variously informed by this paradigm shift, see Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland and Eric Ketelaar, “‘Communities of Memory’: Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005): 146-174.

preservation of cultural materials, all of which have engaged with various aspects of postcolonial theory, critical race theory and collective memory. In the discussion of his experience working with minority communities in the United Kingdom, Andrew Flinn defines “community archives” as:

[C]ollections of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control [...]. The defining characteristic of community archives is the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group/and/or locality *on their own terms*.”⁴⁵

Similarly, in the context of indigenous communities in the United States, Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan argue for the importance of social location and its relation to archival arrangement and description, as they state, “[t]o the goal of representative collecting, then, archivists must add a complementary goal: to preserve the articulation of community identity.”⁴⁶ Politically, these reformulations allow the archives to participate in the project of social justice, providing minoritarian communities the opportunity to interpret their own histories by asserting their particular subject positions in the construction of their archives. In the area of human rights archives, Verne Harris, widely recognized for his work on documenting South Africa’s history of the apartheid, offers clear connection between the political and the epistemological stakes of the archive:

⁴⁵ Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, “Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream,” *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 72. Emphasis original.

⁴⁶ Shilton, Katie and Ramesh Srinivasan. “Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections,” *Archivaria* 63 (2007): 90.

The object does not speak for itself. In interrogating and interpreting the object, the archive, scholars inscribe their own interpretation into it. The interpretation has no meta-textual authority [...]. Scholars are not, can never be, exterior to their objects. They are marked before they interrogate the markings, and this pre-impression shapes their interrogation.⁴⁷

There are many other examples of projects based on the community archive model, which will be discussed in the following chapters. These new archival endeavors are not necessarily models developed in consideration of digital affordances that are currently available for digital archives projects. The moments in these discussions of what I am calling the “interventionist” mode of archiving that draw my attention are the intersections of the discourse around minoritarian agency and the liberatory investment in digital affordances’ capacity to better achieve the democratic ideals of inclusion and diversity. To be certain, the community archives model often articulates its commitment to the theorizations of identity that exceed the parameters of multiculturalism. As Dominique Daniel argues in the context of immigrant histories in North America, this “archival practice has responded to a more complex vision of ethnicity articulated by scholars. As specialists of social history and ethnic studies challenged the essentialist and folklorist model, ethnicity came to be seen as a social construct, the product of complex adaptation processes within and across the host society rather than merely an imported

⁴⁷ Verne Harris, “A Shaft of Darkness: Derrida in the Archive,” in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al., (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2002), 65.

object composed of biographical or cultural traits from the home country.”⁴⁸ As I demonstrate in the next section, such commitment to more complex understanding identity formation gets lost in the discussions about digital tools and platforms.

Ethnographic Realism

My overarching contention throughout this project is that the commitment to inclusion and diversity often finds its solution and answer in digital technologies, motivated in large part by the uncritical subscription to the rhetoric of digital technology’s particular means of liberal individualist notions of agency. In these moments, discussions around inclusion and diversity articulate their representative and political aspects of their projects in terms of realism. I call this particular effect *ethnographic realism*, defined as the intersection of the discourse of evidence, technology, and identity. The argument is that because digital technology facilitates communities’ speaking on their own terms and sharing their collective histories with the broader public, the minoritarian archives achieve their inclusion into *the archive*. In other words, digital archives developed in the community archiving model make minoritarian communities and their histories recognizable and recognized. While it does resonate with more familiar notions of essentialism and authenticity, I am developing the term ethnographic realism here as a way to: 1) emphasize the methodological traces of ethnography (and auto-ethnography) as it was conceived by early cultural anthropology; 2) relate this to the ubiquitous claim of objective realism that is currently particularly active in various digital forms of representation; and 3) recognize what I perceive to be sincere engagement in archival

⁴⁸ Dominique Daniel, “Archival Representations of Immigration and Ethnicity in North American History: From the Ethnicization of Archives to the Archivization of Ethnicity,” *Archival Science* 14, no. 2 (2014): 178.

studies in critiquing the essentialist mode of representing minoritarian subjects, and thus avoid calling it digital essentialism.

Particularly in regards to my last point, I am posing the critique of ethnographic realism as the continuation of the critical work around diversity and inclusion that archival studies has already been doing but has also been missing in regards to digital forms of knowledge. Returning to Daniel, as an example, while her critical analysis of essentialist modes of archiving guides her account of the history of ethnic archives, her consideration of digital archives is perhaps too familiar:

Through virtual collections, they enable connections between individuals and communities, between members of diasporas, and between the ethnic determinant and other sociocultural determinants of identity and belonging — thus potentially leading to more complex and fluid representations of ethnic identities. Designed with the participation of interested communities, they aim to document ethnic identities as participating community members see them. [...] They provide them with new tools to share and transform existing representations of individual and collective identities.⁴⁹

This characterization of the relationship between the community archive model and digital archive rests on 1) seeing the epistemological value of ethnic subject's self-narrative as one of realism, and 2) recognizing the role of digital archive as only instrumental in this project of empowerment through giving voice to the voiceless. There are many issues to contend with here, beginning with the rather restrictive binary of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 195.

dominant and marginal in describing the power relations at work in the telling of minoritarian histories. My purpose in reframing the digital archive as knowledge model is precisely to explore possibilities for various digital tools and methods that are beyond simply instrumental in the telling the “real” histories by the “people.” As a model, then, can the ethnic digital archive epistemologically function to reflect the critique of essentialism that the community archiving model invests? I explore this question with the acknowledgement that, from my own experience, thinking through digital forms and tools is a great challenge, as their “manipulability” often directly corresponds to the level of one’s technical knowledge. I echo here Drucker’s aside that “As one of my digital humanities colleagues used to remark, we would go into the technical discussions as deconstructed relativists and come out as empirically oriented pragmatists.”⁵⁰ For my fellow community archivists, I would remark that we often enter the discussion of race and ethnicity as “postmodern archivists” but come out as cultural ethnographers.⁵¹

Although I invoke specific instances of post-positivist framework for identity formations in each of the case studies, an example of such work that particularly speaks to the issues I raise here about the community archive model’s conception of representation is Laura Kang’s *Compositional Subjects* (2002), in which she unpacks the

⁵⁰ Drucker, xiv.

⁵¹ To be clear, in my critique of “ethnographic realism” of this project, I am not dismissing the entire enterprise of ethnography. More developed critique and the justification of this method as it is currently practiced in the social sciences have been articulated by those who are closely aligned with it. As I describe more fully in Chapter 3, I’m referring to those ethnographic practices of the early cultural anthropologists whose aim was explicitly essentialist. For a recent work that directly engages the history of ethnography’s development in the U.S. academe and its fundamental relationship to race ideology and conception of “culture,” see Brad Evans, *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

formation of the identity category that has become legible as Asian/American women.⁵² Arguing that the various tropes of this figure, both positive and negative, emerge in various historical contexts and representational forms, both self-telling and told by others, her project examines how this identity category came to be and has been deployed. Instead of further investing in the *a priori* of this identity, she argues that the “critical examination of Asian/American women can unsettle and reformulate the given boundaries of social identification, cultural representation, and knowledge construction.”⁵³ As she further argues:

The impossible questions of “What is she?” and “Who are they?” are turned around into other queries: How have Asian/American women been conjured, interpreted, and missed? What constituent parts make up Asian/American women? How are they enfigured differently within and across particular sites of representation?”⁵⁴

First, these questions are also implicitly a critique of the social constructivist account of race and gender: the purpose of locating the (dominant) social forces in the construction of that intersectional subject of Asian/American woman (marginal) is not to more accurately understand the historical accuracy and significance of that subject. Far from determinative, these “particular sites of representation” contain within them some form of representative agency, however contingent, derived from that subject’s participation in those sites of representations. Furthermore, many of these sites have been developed

⁵² Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2002).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

specifically to “explain” the figure of Asian/American woman or to even advocate on behalf of this figure; however empowering those representations may be, they still enfigure the Asian/American woman as primarily the product of various social forces at work. Rather, the identity category of Asian/American woman remains stubbornly undecidable, or “impossible” in Kang’s analysis, not in rejection of the importance or the necessity of “identity,” but to pose a challenge that can “enable a critical revisioning of [the] disciplined modes of knowledge construction and representation.”⁵⁵

Second, Kang’s analysis provides myriad of sites of representation and their genre forms that are familiar in the community archiving model. Some of these include, autobiographical texts by Asian/American women writers, which have been rendered as “autobiographical documents” and the authors as “representative spokespersons for her ethnic community,” and “recurrent visualization, whether through the descriptive language or through photographic reproductions” of Asian/American women in their various states of exploitation globally.⁵⁶ All of these accounts are particularly insightful for this project for they directly link the question of the “what” of representation to the “how,” which is the kind of cultural politics of representation that I bring to bear on the critique of ethnographic realism of community archives model as it produces knowledge of the minoritarian subject. Instead of insisting on the always already social benefits of more inclusive, diverse and often autobiographical archives as the reason for ethnic digital archives, this project seeks less celebratory and more *conditional* relationship between digital archives of minoritarian histories and *the archive*, as expressed by Kang:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 22, 26.

if there must be a field of study called “Asian American women’s history,” it must work through scrutinizing — and not compensating for — the particular limits of the archives and their possible (re)narrations as tangled up with the hierarchical particularization of national bodies and subjects.⁵⁷

Methodology: Case Studies

As evident in the framing of these questions as I have laid out above, this project is primarily a study of methods: those interpretative frameworks for the analysis of race and ethnicity’s cultural politics of representation and those digital methods developed in close alignment with various digital tools. The relationship between the interpretative frameworks and method is broadly defined as modeling. In terms more familiar in social sciences, this project is a qualitative analysis with a set of “how” questions, the answers to which are grounded in specific findings from examples from several digital archives projects of my own initiative as well as those of others’. This project incorporates the values of more pragmatist approaches in information and archival studies that generate findings applicable to those professions the field is aligned with, as well as the critical purchase of more theoretically oriented analysis of the cultural logic that underwrites various digital practices and forms.

As a qualitative analysis, this project proposes case studies as its methodology. As Robert Yin states, case study research is appropriate for “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 163.

boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”⁵⁸ As my cases are experimentations with various digital tools and platforms and not a scientific experiment, random sampling, quantitative measurements and other features of controlled experimentation are not available. The units of analysis in my case studies are distributed throughout the formal aspects of the digital tools and platforms that I use in the process of constructing digital archives as well as in the final product.

Furthermore, “the case study inquiry benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.”⁵⁹ For this project, theoretical propositions are gathered from the notion of knowledge modeling in digital humanities and broadly the post-positivist framework for understanding identity as exemplified by Kang above. Each case study brings to bear specific theorizations of race and ethnicity representative of this framework to each case’s own historical and cultural context. As Yin points out, case studies can be conducted in exploratory, descriptive or evaluative modes. The first two chapters focus on projects which I initiated or collaborated on. These projects are exploratory, designed to seek out new modes of digital archiving through 3D modeling, content management systems and network visualization. The last two chapters focus on the *Library of Congress Flickr Initiative* and *Digital Harlem* and are descriptive. My findings and analyses are based on qualitative data, with the hope that they are applicable to the fields I am bringing together which are also qualitatively driven. As I have described above, this project seeks different theoretical propositions for the intersection of race, archives and technology and

⁵⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2003), 14-15.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 15.

how they might be applied in the development of minoritarian digital archives.

Throughout my case studies, I discuss both the limitations and the possibilities of the digital tools and platforms as they relate to the interpretative frameworks I propose.

For the archival studies audience I have in mind, this project hopes to contribute less sociological account of race and ethnicity in archival projects, in order to demonstrate the critical purchase of deferring, not only affirming, the knowable capacities of identities. From my methodological experimentations grounded in recent developments in the digital humanities, this project also offers specific examples of applications of digital tools and platforms that can further digital archives practices more broadly. For the digital humanities, this project bridges what I perceive to be two largely separate conversations around methodology (tools and data) and the critical analysis of race, gender, class and sexuality in digital culture (collectives such as #transformDH).⁶⁰ By situating the archives both methodologically as practiced by the archivists and theoretically as sites of representation, my discussion imagines different methodological approaches for representing difference. Lastly, for “identity studies,” this project continues the recent metaconsiderations of how “diversity” is currently conceived and practiced in the institutions of higher learning in the age of inclusion.⁶¹ By discussing the archives alongside *the archive*, as well as specific technologies alongside the Foucauldian *technology*, I hope to provide a glimpse into how those responsible for creating the resources for scholarly research wrestle with diversity and difference in the current age of information economy and multiculturalism. Specifically, this project offers archivists

⁶⁰ “#TransformDH | Transformative Digital Humanities: Doing Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Class in DH,” accessed December 30, 2014, <http://transformdh.org/>.

⁶¹ Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

and digital technologists as examples of “diversity workers” as discussed most recently by Sarah Ahmed.⁶² As the archives matter crucially for the critique of *the archive* in both the digital humanities and identity studies, my discussions frequently turn to the fundamental concepts and practices of the archival field and profession, in order to explore the possibilities for the ethnic digital archive.

Chapter Outline

Building on the foregrounding of digital archives as knowledge model, the first two chapters offer case studies that explore more experimental approaches to digital archive projects. Chapter 2, titled “Immersive Archive,” discusses the possibilities for archival modeling in digital 3D simulation models of built environments. In the digital humanities, 3D models as methodology have been most notably developed by classicists in their efforts to digitally reconstruct ancient sites for which only partial evidence remains. This case study discusses the process of digitally constructing a 3D model of a contemporary site in East Los Angeles known for its collection of Chicana/o murals that were organized and painted by the community during the Chicana/o movement in the 1970s through 1980s. Its interpretative framework is situated within the sustained discussions of space/place in Chicana/o Studies in its attention to the “dialectical relationship” between identity formations and the socio-political realities of the barrios in the U.S.⁶³ In my discussion, I draw parallels between certain archival practices, such as appraisal and provenance, and the “procedural aspects” of 3D modeling as developed by

⁶² Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁶³ Raúl H. Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

digital classicists. Arguing that the Chicana/o murals' site-specificity demands a dialectical reading, as opposed to an ethnographic one that essentializes these murals as collectively a social realist reproduction of Chicana/o identity in the barrio, I propose the 3D model not as a faithful reproduction of the site but rather as an immersive digital archive that documents the site's contradictions and ambivalence. Taking advantage of 3D model's particular capacity to represent spatial relations, this case study aligns the affordances of this specific digital method with the critical priorities of Chicana/o studies' consideration of the dynamic between identity and space.

Chapter 3 begins by contextualizing the current digital archive fever through the history of ethnographic photo-documentation of Native Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century — a period in U.S. history marked by the popularization of photography as the technology of documentation and the emergence of ethnography in cultural anthropology. In the context of this techno-cultural development, the discourse of Native Americans as the “vanishing race” had emerged. Taking as its source material the archive of Edward S. Curtis' lifelong work *The North American Indian* (1907-1930), which remains today as one of the most influential representation of Native Americans in popular imagination, this collaborative digital project invokes the critical framework of “performativity” to counter Curtis' claims of authenticity as well as to locate the forms of agency within archival practices through digital maneuverings. Considering the techno-cultural origin and the epistemological legacy of such ethnic archives, the “performing archive” imagines ways to leverage current digital tools and methods to not simply reproduce past archives under the banner of “preservation and access,” but to reveal their

various “archival grains.”⁶⁴ This case study explores the non-linearity of Scalar, a content management system developed specifically for digital scholarship, as a model for richly contextualizing and introducing contingencies to the source material. It also experiments with network visualization as a way to visualize and analyze this archive’s social context and its ideology of race. As a project that productively unveils the relationship amongst race, documentation and technology, *The North American Indian*, I argue, offers the opportunity to reflect on set of assumptions that underlie digital archive fever’s cultural preservation efforts, most triumphantly put forth by the universalist claim of “open access.”

The fourth chapter considers this project’s critique of ethnographic realism beyond the identity-specific digital archive projects that I have discussed thus far. It considers the broader “Archives 2.0” movement in the archival profession in the U.S. and the ways in which techno-utopianism of the movement contributed to the flattening of the discussion around archivists’ self-awareness as the mediator of the familiar binary between history and memory as categories of knowledge. Drawing from the framework offered by the related fields of memory studies and new media studies for understanding social relations in digital culture, I argue that the efforts such as crowdsourcing archival description and soliciting social media user comments are more indicative of “connective memory” rather than “community memory,” as reflected in the *Library of Congress Flickr Commons Initiative*. Through this analysis, this chapter specifically addresses what has been implicitly present in the discussions of each case study: “instrumentalism”

⁶⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

in digital projects that often binds us to the cumulative and progressionist historical narrative active in the formation of the national subject.⁶⁵

For the conclusion, I examine the ways in which the discourse of criminality of black bodies in the U.S. is inscribed in an award winning digital history project, *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930*. I argue that while this digital archive provides helpful access points to the sources that the authors have compiled, composed primarily of legal documents in municipal archives, the reliance on that archive in making the claim of “everyday,” and doing so in manner that offers sociological and historical corrective to those accounts by the “black literary imagination” results in a highly problematic representation of the place and time of the Harlem Renaissance. While compiling legal records of Harlem during the era and providing a map-based access points to those records could indeed be a productive scholarly endeavor, the danger lies in the project’s claim that this data represents the “everyday.” I argue that both the geographical “real” provided by the embedded Google Map and the categories of “everyday” indicated in the options available under “events,” which are predominantly formed by categories of crime, contrasts with at least one account of Harlem, one that is offered by Ralph Ellison in his essay “Harlem in Nowhere.” I close with the relevance of my analysis for the current social uprisings in response to the always already criminalization of black bodies as evident in the recent deaths in Ferguson, Missouri and elsewhere through U.S. I locate in the discussions around these events issues that are also tangentially about the relationship between data, technology and evidence as it relates to black lives in the U.S.: the prosecutor’s selective dismissal of social media

⁶⁵ Alan Liu, “Where Is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 490–509.

accounts as evidence; the conservative media's claim of "transparency" in the prosecution's making forensic evidence available; the liberal media's characterization of the same as "data dump;" and the formation of "black memory" through #BlackLivesMatter on social media.

CHAPTER 2

Immersive Archive: A 3D Model of Chicana/o Mural Environment in Los Angeles¹

Introduction: Chicana/o Mural Movement

Community murals in major cities across the U.S. are recognized as one of the most celebrated forms of public art. Alongside of other communitarian endeavors that aspire to social change by raising political consciousness, community mural movement exemplifies the connection between activism and art. The community mural movement in the U.S. emerged in the 1960s through the 1970s in various minority-dominant neighborhoods of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco as an artistic expression accompanying the political activism of the civil rights movement.² Prior to becoming an integral part of urban renewal/beautification programs commissioned by the cultural affairs offices at the city, state and federal level, it largely began as a grassroots movement that “spread across the nation as part of the general creative outburst accompanying the various community organizing efforts and community-development programs.”³

Prior to the community mural movement in the U.S., murals were established as a popular form of public art through the Federal Art Project (FAP, 1935-1943), a program of the New Deal’s Works Projects Administration (WPA, 1935-1943) that provided economic relief for many artists through commissioning public art projects that decorate

¹ The project is viewable at <http://estradamurals.humanities.ucla.edu/>

² For an extensive overview of the history of the community mural movement, see Eva Sperling Cockcroft, John Pitman Weber, and James D. Cockcroft, *Toward a People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

the walls of public spaces such as post offices, schools and municipal buildings, many of which still exist today.⁴ In many ways, the New Deal's mural program was greatly influenced by the mural movement of the post-Revolution Mexico in the 1920s spearheaded by Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, collectively referred to as the "Big Three." Unlike the government-sponsored murals in the New Deal era, however, the Mexican mural movement prioritized social protest and expressed various historical injustices faced by the poor and the colonized in manner reflective of the Mexican Revolution's (1910-20) mobilization of the working class, agrarians, and the indigenous populations. Because these works by the "Big Three" were disruptive rather than simply commemorative in their depictions of social order, they often caused controversies, which at times resulted in their removal from public view.⁵

While certainly influenced by the precedent of the federal mural program, the community mural movement in the urban centers of California has had a particular cultural-historical and geographical proximity to the Mexican mural movement. At the core of the mural movement in Southern California has been the artists who identified as Chicana/o, the term of politicized self-identity for Mexicans in the U.S., which emerged during the *El Movimiento* that began to organize soon after the end of World War II.⁶

⁴ For an overview of FAP in art historical context, see Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵ For more on the controversy of Diego Rivera's murals, see Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁶ "The term Chicano is contentious, having been popularized as an expression of identity and pride in the 1960s, and today used also by gang members. Even among activists the term Chicano or Chicana has different meanings. To some it includes only Mexicans born in the United States, while for others it encompasses those born on either side of the border. The arrival of large numbers of Central Americans has generated a third school, which accepts this new

Also known as the Chicano Movement, it “sought to firmly establish Chicanas/os’ sociopolitical place in U.S. territory,” in which “the recognition that the continent of America was essentially indigenous territory became one of the most fundamental steps toward decolonization and liberation of oppressed communities.”⁷ Creatively, this movement also activated the aesthetic tradition of Mexican murals, as Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez state,

Nowhere did the community-based movement take firmer root than in the Chicano communities of California. With the Mexican mural tradition as part of their heritage, murals were a particularly congenial form for Chicano artists to express the collective vision of their community. [...]

As home to the largest concentration of Mexicans and people of Mexican ancestry anywhere outside of Mexico City, Los Angeles became the site of the largest concentration of Chicano murals in the United States.⁸

The movement’s heyday in Los Angeles was between 1970-1980. In 1976, Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) was formed by the renowned muralist and activist Judy Baca, who in preceding years had successfully launched the Citywide Murals Program, the first city-sponsored murals program in Los Angeles, assigned under the

reality by using Chicano as a political term rather than one referring to a single nationality,” in Rodolfo Acuña, *Anything but Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1996), 9.

⁷ Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 1–2.

⁸ Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet-Sánchez, *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 10.

Department of Recreation and Parks.⁹ In 1987, a group of community leaders, artists, art conservators and activists formed the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (MCLA) to support mural programs and to raise funds to restore and document murals all over the city.¹⁰ For the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics, the office of then-mayor Tom Bradley commissioned a series of murals by artists of diverse backgrounds to create works along various freeways throughout the city, solidifying Los Angeles as the “mural capital of world” and marking the integration of community mural movement into the mainstream public art program.¹¹

However, in the following decades, both the appearance of and the public perception towards murals suffered significantly. Murals have collectively become visible evidence of urban decay with the emergence of graffiti art, which were often sprayed on top of these murals. The deterioration of murals was worsened by the lack of organized effort by the city for the conservation of the murals. This shift from murals as expressions of community pride to symbols of urban plight and gang violence invited controversies and objections by various community boards that were no longer welcoming of murals, particularly when those murals contained overtly political messages. In 2003, finding it difficult to legislatively categorize and distinguish community murals from advertisements and other public paintings with commercial

⁹ “Home - SPARCinLA - Social and Public Art Resource Center | ART | COMMUNITY | EDUCATION | SOCIAL JUSTICE | SINCE 1976,” accessed September 8, 2014, <http://sparcinla.org/>.

¹⁰ “Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles,” accessed September 8, 2014, <http://www.muralconservancy.org/>.

¹¹ Cultural Affairs Department and CalTrans in 2003 dedicated funds for the project to restore many of the murals that have been neglected over a few decades: funds have been dedicated over a few decades or the neglect has happened over a few decades? Also “a few” is very vague http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/07/0717_030717_lamurals_2.html.

intent, the city council enacted a moratorium on all murals throughout the city. After sustained advocacy work to resume mural activities in Los Angeles, and not without the broadening of the stakeholders from the increasing popularity and acceptance of the recent more mainstream “street art” genre, a new mural ordinance was passed to allow for new mural projects beginning in 2013.¹²

Mural Archives in Los Angeles

Throughout this history of Chicana/o muralism in Los Angeles, the key organizations of the movement have devoted themselves to the documentation of murals. Along with its continuing commitment to the creation of new murals, many of which are now digitally rendered and printed on large sheets of amalgamated metal, SPARC has been developing an extensive database of digitized slides of community murals in California and beyond.¹³ MCLA has recently launched its redesigned website that features a publicly accessible database of many of the important murals in the greater Los Angeles area. One of the most valuable resources for mural researchers is also the extensive catalog *Street Gallery: Guide to over 1000 Los Angeles Murals* by Robin Dunitz, whose research archive for the book is currently being digitized at the Architecture and Fine Art Library at the University of Southern California.¹⁴ In addition to these currently available archives, numerous scholarly works have been produced over

¹² Catherine Saillant, “Council Lifts Ban on Public Murals,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/28/local/la-me-0829-murals-20130829>.

¹³ I would like to thank Judy Baca and Pilar Castillo, the archivist at SPARC, for discussing these ideas with me in the initial stages of planning, which also led to co-organizing of a wonderful workshop at the 2012 Archival Education and Research Institute.

¹⁴ Robin J. Dunitz, *Street Gallery: Guide to 1000 Los Angeles Murals* (Los Angeles: RJD Enterprises, 1998).

the years from various disciplines, which attest to the significance of the history of the Chicana/o muralism in Los Angeles and its unique capacity to demonstrate the relationship between urban environments and the communities situated within them.

Broadly surveying these archives of Chicana/o murals in Los Angeles, I am particularly drawn to those murals that were conceived as a group or a series, for they raise unique challenges that this case study attempts to navigate both archivally and digitally. The most prominent example is the longest mural in the world, *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* that stretches over a half-mile in the Tujunga Flood Control Channel in San Fernando Valley. Beginning in 1974 and still continuing today under the direction of Judy Baca, it stands as “a landmark pictorial representation of the history of ethnic peoples of California from prehistoric times to 1950s.”¹⁵ Composed of a series of individual yet continuous murals, this mural project transforms the unremarkably functional space of the flood channel into a creative space whose aim is to document the alternate history that informs the broader geographical region of Los Angeles. The *Chicano Park*, “built in the middle of a series of highway pylons” in the *Barrio Logan* neighborhood of San Diego, is another example. The murals at the *Park* created by artists and community members “function as a visual reminder and documentation of the efforts that ultimately led to the construction of the park,” transforming an area that would otherwise be a painful reminder of the various freeway developments’ impact on this and many other *barrios* in the region.¹⁶

¹⁵ “The Great Wall of Los Angeles - SPARCinLA,” accessed December 26, 2014, <http://sparcinla.org/programs/the-great-wall-mural-los-angeles/>.

¹⁶ Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 156.

These murals, examples of what Guisela Latorre calls the “mural environment,” can be theorized as archives in that they are efforts to document collective memories and do so in manner that forms a self-contained collection.¹⁷ Their value is just as evidential in relation to Chicana/o history, in these examples, as it is aesthetical. Furthermore, the motivations of collective identity and political empowerment, self-definition and shared history that animate the development of mural environments also echo in the community archive model, as I have discussed in the introduction, intervening in ways that fill the gaps of history or prevent further erasure. As an archive, then, what should be its order and arrangement? How do we document and preserve mural environments, which contain individual units but are also continuous? One of the two most important archival contexts in this case is spatial, where order and arrangement seemingly exceed both the familiar archival practice and also the familiar form of exhibits and linear narratives found in generic digital archives. The other important context is the Chicana/o identity formation as interpreted in this visual and spatial archive. If what is represented in the mural environment, more so than the murals that stand individually, is not only the singularly recognizable collective identity of Chicana/os in this environment, but also the complexity and the diversity of the histories that are documented within it, then any new effort to document the site stands to benefit from a new archival model with the capacity to represent both space and identity as specific yet continuous. Informed by my background as an archivist of public and community art and, more recently, inspired by the level of spatial representation and analysis in digital reconstruction models developed by the scholars in classics, archeology and architecture at the University of California –

¹⁷ Ibid., 142.

Los Angeles (UCLA), this case study is an exploration of 3D models as a model for site-specific digital archive.

Developed with Michael Rocchio, a Ph.D. candidate in architecture at UCLA, during the *Vectors-CTS Summer Institute on Digital Approaches to American Studies*, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and hosted at the University of Southern California in 2011, the model was constructed with Sketchup, a popular tool for 3D modeling for both novices and more advanced users, and narrated through HyperCities, a spatio-temporal authoring platform developed by UCLA.¹⁸ Focusing on the Chicana/o mural environment's site-specificity in relation to *barrio* history, this case study examines the archival and interpretative utility of the 3D model's set of representational affordances that may offer certain advantages over the previous efforts to document these mural environments. However, I do not suggest that the 3D model of this case study aspires to positivist notions of realism in respect to spatial representations, and not only because of our model's relative crudity compared to those more sophisticated examples that will be cited in the discussion throughout. In fact, the methodological consideration of 3D modeling for this case study continues my overarching critique of the "ethnographic realism," as described in the introductory chapter, to which those cultural artifacts such as the Chicana/o murals are particularly susceptible. Most broadly, this case study is premised on the notion that "subjects are not

¹⁸ I would like to thank Craig Deitrich, Phil Ethington, Tara McPherson and John Rowe for their support during our residency.

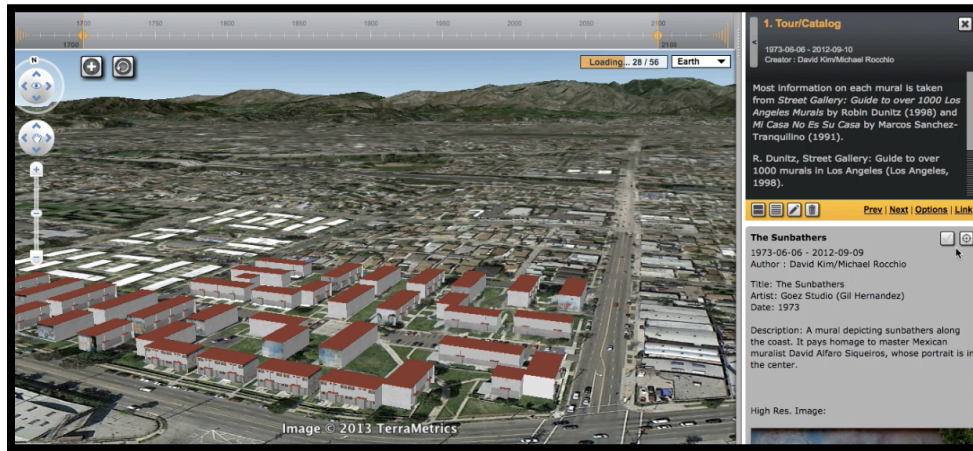
preexisting but are derived in practice, a practice based on the specificities of place,” for which Chicana/o mural environment serve as a rather immediate example.¹⁹

However tempting it is to view the dynamic amongst *barrios*, murals and Chicana/o collective identity as auto-ethnographically representational or determined, it is rather more complex and contingent, as is the case with all forms of cultural production. As I discuss below, critical considerations of the Chicana/o cultural production, including the murals, have consistently emphasized the importance of ambivalence for understanding the *barrio*'s site-specificity. As a “tinker toy” model of the mural environment that is the Estrada Courts Public Housing located in East Los Angeles, this *immersive archive* is an attempt to methodologically represent the critical priorities articulated by Chicana/o studies particular investment in spatial analysis.²⁰ Instead of an archive that further inscribes the ‘what is’ of ethnic identities onto the murals at Estrada Courts, the discussion of this case study describes the process of 3D modeling and the possibilities and the limitations of representing spatial analysis of identity formation in this way.

¹⁹ Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 33.

²⁰ Christopher Johanson, “Visualizing History: Modeling in the Eternal City,” *Visual Resources* 25, no. 4 (2009): 407.

3D Model as Archival Methodology



[Figure 1: A view of the Estrada Courts in the model in HyperCities]

Many claims of mobility across time and space and the sensorial immediacy of ‘being there’ abound in popular discussions about digital simulations. These claims often take on the rhetoric of virtual reality and, more recently, augmented reality, whose main features are interactivity and immersion. With the increasing ubiquity of this technology in popular culture, emerging fields such as video game studies have been analyzing various dimensions of 3D interactivity and immersivity found in various media forms, from the digitally produced fantasy landscapes of game environments to the renderings of contemporary cities in Google Earth. These film and media studies-oriented discussions offer important analyses that relate the technical dimensions of user experience to the longstanding issues of temporality, performativity and narrative that are often critically informed by phenomenology and theories of embodiment.²¹ Alongside these

²¹ For examples, see the collection of essay in Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

considerations, 3D model's applications for digital scholarship and research in the humanities have been developed by the fields such as classics, archeology and architecture, which have been the "early adopters of digital technology."²² Moving away from the gaming industry's claims of reality, these discussions emphasize two aspects of 3D model's methodological utility: the "procedural" and the "representational."²³ These two aspects correspond to Willard McCarty's own two-part definition of "models," the term he uses more broadly and not specific to 3D models: first, "modeling" as "the heuristic process of constructing and manipulating models;" and second, "model" as "representation of something for the purposes of study."²⁴ As a methodology, 3D models allow discovery and interpretation both in the process of constructing a digitally simulated environment and in the final product, the 3D model itself. Building on the framework of "archives as knowledge models" established in the previous chapter, the first part of the discussion focuses on the relationship between the procedural aspects of 3D modeling and the various steps in "archival processing," which is "the arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use." The second part explores both the opportunities and the limitations our 3D model's capacity to represent the dynamic between Chicana/o identity and the *barrio*.²⁵

²² Melissa Terras, "The Digital Classicist: Disciplinary Focus and Interdisciplinary Vision," *Digital Research in the Study of Classical Antiquity* (2010): 171.

²³ Johanson, "Visualizing History."

²⁴ Willard McCarty, "Modeling: A Study in Words and Meanings," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/view?docId=blackwell/9781405103213/9781405103213.xml&chunk.id=ss1-3-7>.

²⁵ Richard Pearce-Moses, "Processing," *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, 2005 <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/p/processing>.

Archival Procedures of 3D Modeling²⁶

When we began exploring potential Chicana/o mural sites in Los Angeles, we initially proposed selecting the most prominent murals that have remained important to the history of the Chicana/o mural movement. However, we soon realized during our initial design meetings that this approach ran counter to our objective of exploring the advantages of 3D model for the purposes of site-specific analysis. Our team of advisors echoed during these meetings the “process-based inquiry” of 3D modeling as described by Lisa Snyder, a 3D model practitioner and researcher:

[S]cholars are challenged to think about materiality, structure, the interrelation of building elements, possible physical manifestations of cultural practices, and vernacular building traditions as part of a complex web of data that informs the creation process and grounds the material evidence.²⁷

Unless we were planning on reconstructing the city’s entire built environment, modeling buildings with murals from various neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles would not be productive in exploring these “interrelations.” Though we had Chicana/o murals as a broad conceptual site for investigation, the project required a specific physical site for reconstruction in order for the final product to yield any meaningful result. In order to make the case for the 3D modeling’s methodological utility, then, the project required a

²⁶ See Appendix I for details.

²⁷ Lisa M. Snyder, “Virtual Reality for Humanities Scholarship,” *New Technologies in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 3 (2012): 398.

site whose “interrelations” could be articulated through this form, or a site that contained possibilities for spatial analysis that could be visually demonstrated. As two of our advisors emphasized, the challenge here was to “show an argument” and that argument must reflect some form of spatial analysis that digital simulation models can uniquely represent.²⁸

The Original Order of an Environment

The Estrada Courts Public Housing in East Los Angeles, despite the repetitive architectural simplicity often found in public housing, is a site that productively and precisely provides a contained unit. Built during World War II to meet the increasing demands for housing from the rapid growth of the industrial sector, the bracero guest worker program, and the return of servicemen, it has been home predominantly to residents of Mexican heritage of many generations.²⁹ From 1972 to 1978, a local resident artist Charles “Gato” Felix led the effort to organize resident youths and invite other muralists to transform Estrada Courts into an open gallery of community murals. Sponsored by the Housing Authority and the local fire department as well as funds raised by the residents, the effort ultimately resulted in approximately 80 murals throughout the housing complex, of which about 60 remain today. It is what Guisela Latorre calls the “mural environment.”

²⁸ Tara McPherson, “Introduction: Media Studies and the Digital Humanities,” *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 2 (2009): 119–23.

²⁹ For more extensive account, see Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983).

These environments consist of initiatives to create a series of murals in close proximity to one another and within a defined and limited space.

These murals are not supposed to be seen as single works of art, but rather, their position and iconography should be understood in function of the surrounding murals and in relation to the space in which they reside.³⁰

Estrada Courts Public Housing as the object of analysis, procedurally speaking, provides the necessary “defined and limited space” for this modeling project. As we toured the site using various references including the map produced by the Housing Authority, we paid attention to not only the content and style of each mural but also to any order that may exist in their placements. For the process of modeling, Chris Johanson argues that “the real utility only arrives when limits, rules, and methods are imposed:” the necessary parameterization of representation.³¹ For this project, the parameterization of the 3D model is established by the “original order,” which serves two purposes: “preserves existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records,” and “exploits the record creator’s mechanisms to access the records.”³² Because the mural environment functions as an archive whose order exceeds the linearity of traditional archives, using the 3D model as a digital archival method captures the “original order” of Estrada Courts in manner that is more effective than, say, a book catalog such as Dunitz’ *Street Gallery*. As I describe below, this order contains certain

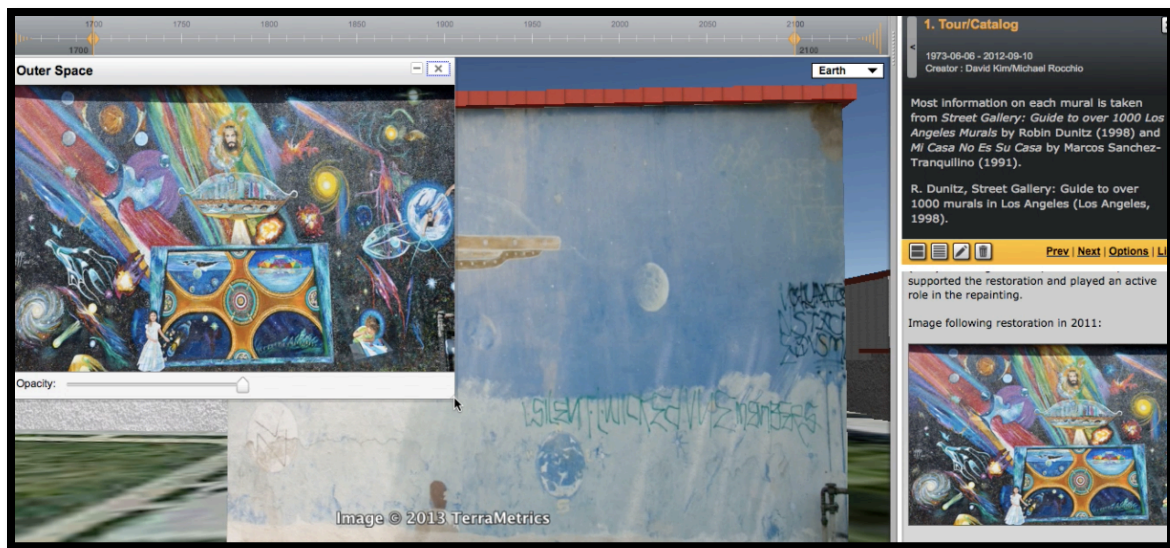
³⁰ Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 142.

³¹ Johanson, “Visualizing History,” 406.

³² Richard Pearce-Moses, “Original Order,” *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, 2005, <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/original-order>.

spatial logic that communicates the meaning of the site beyond the simple celebration of Chicana/o identity formation.

Ephemerality of Sites



[Figure 2: A View in the Model of “Outer Space” by Richard Haro, showing the recent restoration]

The archival framework of the process also addresses the relationship between documentation and the issues of conservation and preservation of the murals.³³ The general tendency is to view commemorative spaces, memorial grounds and other sites dedicated to public memory with a certain sense of permanence, but their longevity, as with all public sites, is far from secured: the urban landscape, natural or manmade,

³³ Preservation here refers to the effort to maintain the present condition of an artifact, which in this case includes activities such as applying UV coating and cleaning accumulated dirt. Conservation refers to restoration of the murals to their original condition, such as removing graffiti and treating faded colors with new paint. Documentation is creating records of the artifact’s existence.

evolves over time, often through direct policies. A recent independent survey conducted by SPARC reveals that approximately 1,500 murals once existed in Los Angeles, and about 60% of the city-sponsored works have vanished.³⁴ Some have been whitewashed per the decisions of the community boards, while others have been left to the elements without effort towards their restoration, gradually fading and vandalized with graffiti and *placas* (also called “tags”) to the point where the original art is no longer recognizable. Because many Chicana/o murals are located in neighborhoods that are especially subject to new constructions initiated by urban development programs, they often disappear with the buildings that have been taken down. From our numerous site visits over the span of several weeks during the summer institute and a follow-up visit a year later, the ephemerality of the murals became quite clear. Many murals documented in our various sources have become obsolete prior to our project. Some have significantly changed even within the short intervening period. For example, “Organic Stimulus” by the muralist Ernesto de la Loza was completely restored between the year 2011 and 2012.³⁵

The evolving nature of built environments, even within a short time-span of contemporary sites, requires decisions about the temporal dimensions of digital reconstructions during the modeling process. Decisions for this project are guided by “documentation strategy,” defined by archivists as “a methodology that guides selection and assures retention of adequate information about a specific geographic area, a topic, a

³⁴ Christina Hoag, “L.A. Artists Fight to Save City’s Legacy of Murals,” *LA Daily News*, September 4, 2010, <http://www.dailynews.com/20100904/la-artists-fight-to-save-citys-legacy-of-murals>.

³⁵ “Lost and Ruined Mural Re-Born,” accessed December 26, 2014, <http://www.muralconservancy.org/press/lost-and-ruined-mural-re-born>.

process or an event.”³⁶ Although the term documentation is relevant in many other contexts, it has a specific application for archivists:

Documentation strategies are typically undertaken by collaborating records creators, archives, and users. A key element is the analysis of the subject to be documented; how that subject is documented in existing records, and information about the subject that is lacking in those records; and the development of a plan to capture adequate documentation of that subject, including the creation of records, if necessary.³⁷

Considering the availability of the records of the murals from prior decades, as well as the value in creating new records that show the murals’ ephemerality, we made the decision to model the site as it exists in 2012, which we indicate in the description of the model. Furthermore, as documentation is fundamentally different from conservation, the model does not try to digitally *restore* the site to its original condition; rather it is a digital reconstruction of the present site. This is where our documentation strategy departs from the “original order” that guides arrangement. While the spatial dimension of 3D modeling allows us to maintain the “original (spatial) order,” the temporal limitations of the method require limiting the timeframe of the site we are documenting. In this opportunity to create the most up-to-date reconstruction of Estrada Courts, the decision to not to use those previous documentations of the mural environments in their more pristine and ‘complete’ condition is guided by our judgment that the absences and the ‘paratexts’ of *placas* exist as important evidence in our current analysis of the site.

³⁶ Richard Pearce-Moses, “Documentation Strategy,” *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, 2005, <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/d/documentation-strategy>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Another approach would be to utilize the timespan metadata of KML file structure, which allows platforms such as Google Earth to display only those details that fall into the specific timespan chosen by the user in the interface.³⁸ However, this approach in our case also risks temporal false specificity as images of the murals from every year of their existence were not consistently available, thus falsely representing the site’s evolution. The strategy was to include, when available, images of the murals in their previous state in the narrative layer of HyperCities, which at least provides ‘now-and-then’ perspective, attesting to the ephemerality of the mural environment [Figure 2].



[Figure 3: “Leopard,” Indio and V. Cholo]

From our multiple site visits and archival research, it became clear that the *placas* present at the site alongside of the murals raise important questions that go beyond the issues of conservation and preservation. While the documentation of the murals from the perspective of a mural conservator primarily interested in their restoration may consider *placas* as vandalism, our decision to include them in our model reflects a more dialogic view of Chicana/o cultural production. As detailed in *Mi Casa No Es Su Casa: Chicano Murals and Barrio Calligraphy as Systems of Significant at Estrada Courts*, a master’s

³⁸ Keyhold Markup Language (KML), developed as a variation of XML for the purposes of digital mapping, is a widely used file format in platforms such as google maps and google earth.

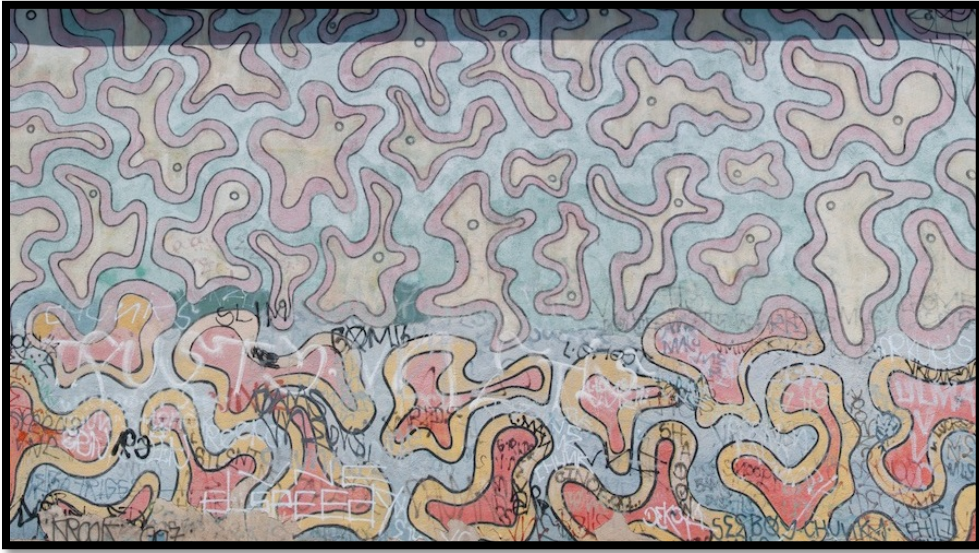
thesis by Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, the dynamic between murals/muralists and the tags/taggers have their own history of contention and collaboration over the canvas-space of the walls.³⁹ He argues through his extensive attention to the *placas* at Estrada Courts that they should be theorized as a part of the spectrum of the “system of signification” of the “Chicano vernacular” as with the murals themselves.⁴⁰ As he and others have argued, *placas* represent the “place-consciousness” of the *barrio* that at times conflicts with the overall message of community empowerment that is expressed through murals. The *placas* in the *barrios* are different from graffiti in that the former represents the method of marking territories by the members associated with local gangs, which in the case of the Estrada Courts is *Varrío Nuevo Estrada* or “VNE.”⁴¹ The irony here is that not only the members of VNE are responsible for the *placas* currently present at the site, but also that the previous generation of VNE was recruited by Charles “Gato” Felix to collaboratively design and paint the murals. Although this case study does not perform the level of systematic cataloging of the *placas* as that Sanchez-Tranquilino does, we chose to use our images of the murals with *placas* as they current exist and also to highlight their importance through one of the site tours in HyperCities. The importance of the presence of *placas* at the site is also the primary reason for making available the high-resolution images of the walls alongside of their low-resolution surrogates: the former makes *placas* legible for close inspection while the latter minimizes the time it

³⁹ Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, “Mi Casa No Es Su Casa: Chicano Murals and Barrio Calligraphy as Systems of Signification at Estrada Courts, 1972-1978” (Master’s Thesis, UCLA, 1991).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

takes to initially load and continuously refresh the model as part of the user experience [Figure 3].



[Figure 4: "Untitled," Charles "Gato" Felix]



[Figure 5: "Chicano Pride," unknown]



[Figure 6: a View in the Model of “We Are Not a Minority,” El Congreso de Artistas Cosmicos de Las Americas de San Diego]



[Figure 7: a View in the Model of “Moratorium: Black and White Mural,” Willie Herron and Gronk]

Related to the questions raised by the presence of *placas* at Estrada Courts is the diverse genre of murals present at the site. As previously mentioned, the Chicana/o mural movement aligned itself with the political ethos of the Mexican mural movement. As these murals are created in concert with the members of the community and placed

within that community, the murals' depictions of the history of social inequality and political protest are expressed in ways that explicitly affirm the collective identity of Chicana/os in the *barrios*. Murals of this nature at Estrada Courts reference Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union, the protest against the Vietnam War organized by *El Movimiento*, a memorial for the victims of gang violence and other scenes of the everyday struggle [Figure 6 and Figure 7]. If one were to rely only on the much publicized accounts of Estrada Courts, then the perception would be that the murals at Estrada Courts are always overtly political. However, much less visible sections of the mural environment of Estrada Courts, particularly throughout the tight corridors and other in-between spaces, contain pastoral scenes of animals, rivers, mountains and woodlands. Even more unexpected are the murals in the style of "supergraphics," composed of geometric patterns [Figure 4]. These murals are more closely aligned with the "environmentalist mural movement" of the 1970s and the 1980s as opposed to the community mural movement's social realism. As one art critic commented on the murals commissioned by City Walls (1966-1977) in New York City: "successive in bands of color or modular patterns which echo systems of architectural construction in terms of decorative overlay do not have a public content. They embellish 'ugly' points in the city, but that merely reduces their content to being a symbol of sensitivity and control in a squalid or untidy environment."⁴²

While the prominently displayed social realist murals certainly deserve more critical attention for their greater level of both aesthetic sophistication and the legibility of their political meaning, such attention also disembodies these murals from their

⁴² Cockcroft, Weber, and Cockcroft, *Toward a People's Art*, 40.

environment. As a result, it implies a rather narrow understanding of cultural practice, limiting the community's capacity to represent itself to those modes of expression regarded as socially productive, politically viable, and legibly identitarian. As the urban planner and community organizer James Rojas argues, the more mundane uses and arrangements of streets and front yards, among other aspects of the "enacted environment of the *barrios* in East Los Angeles" attest to place-consciousness of cultural identity in a manner more reflective of Michel de Certeau's notion of "everyday life."⁴³ Considered as one of the foundational theories for the analysis of popular culture, de Certeau's "everyday," at the most basic level, challenges modes of analyses that favor structural or politically-determined meaning of space and the relations formed within it. He argues that "a practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference."⁴⁴ Likewise, these murals of different genres, less explicitly empowering but nonetheless coherent by the consistent presence of "indigenist iconography" of the mythic homeland of Aztlán across different styles, in certain ways function more importantly in "making place" of Estrada Courts not only as a "physical space on behalf of the Chicana/o community" but also very self-consciously an "autonomous space."⁴⁵

⁴³ James Thomas Rojas, "The Enacted Environment: The Creation of 'Place' by Mexicans and Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles" (Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991).

⁴⁴ Michel de. Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 18.

⁴⁵ The cultural nationalism of the Chicana/o movement invoked the mythic history of the Aztlán, the place of the pre-Aztec civilization speculated by archeologists and historians to be located in the current U.S. southwest region, to challenge the dominant assumptions about citizenship and belonging: 'activists, artists, writers and radical thinkers understood the uniqueness of the

The presence of these less identitarian genres of murals at Estrada Courts also speaks to the recent discussions around “archival genres” in archival studies. Referencing the term genre’s origin in rhetoric and literary studies as the framing of the special issue of *Archival Science*, editors Gillian Oliver and Wendy Duff offer “archival genres” as a way of framing the “recognition of context, and exploration of influences that shape and fashion communicative activity...in archival endeavor(s).”⁴⁶ This framing is useful as a subtle movement away from the objectivist implications in the longstanding question of “what is a record?” towards the acknowledgement of the subjective nature of the category of records as well as the standards by which archivists assess archival value. Because these conventions vary according to context, Pamela McKenzie and Elisabeth Davies argue that the “items of everyday life,” those seemingly inconsequential items such as “lists, reminders and calendars,” may contain more valuable information about a person or an organization than those records that exist more self-consciously as records.⁴⁷ If archival practice were to only focus on the extraordinary material manifestations of culture, as the ethnic archive often does, then what would become of documentation of these “lesser” murals? What if Estrada Courts were being reconstructed long after the site’s disappearance, as the objects of what a digital classicist does with access to the “partial evidence” of a past-existence, which would only selectively document those prominent displays of Chicana/o identity?

Chicana/o experience and maintained that Aztlán as a nation was situated somewhere in a political, geographic, and spiritual borderland between Mexico and the United States, even though we don’t really know its exact location.’ Latorre, 67, 141, 143.

⁴⁶ Gillian Oliver and Wendy M. Duff, “Genre Studies and Archives: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Archival Science* 12, no. 4 (2012): 374.

⁴⁷ Pamela J. McKenzie and Elisabeth Davies, “Genre Systems and ‘Keeping Track’ in Everyday Life,” *Archival Science* 12, no. 4 (2012): 437–60.

Representational Methodology



[Figure 8: a View in the Model of an Interior Alleyway]

Thus far, I have been describing the ways in which the procedural aspects of 3D modeling allow us reimagine archival order, arrangement and genre for documenting sites in which spatial context and parameters matter rather critically. But how do we assess the methodological utility of the final product of the model itself? As mentioned above, my approach here emphasizes not only the 3D model's capacity to represent a site but ultimately how that model is able to express critical frameworks. Beyond the procedural aspects, Chris Johanson, a digital classicist, proposes digital modeling as:

representational methodology for the study of ancient sites, for which the model serves as a “tinker-toy” (borrowed from the sciences) to enable hypothesis testing, visual argumentation, and refutability. That the source

evidence is primarily architecture only confuses things by letting one focus on how close the digital reconstruction approximates reality.⁴⁸

Although there are differences in objectives between the digital reconstruction of ancient sites that no longer remain and that of contemporary sites such as the Estrada Courts, as I will describe below, Johanson's notion of "representational methodology" applies to my case study for several reasons. First, he refutes "realism," or the "1:1 connection to an ontological reality," as the end goal of modeling.⁴⁹ In the humanities mode of inquiry, the claim of a representation's verisimilitude to an "ontological reality" is considered neither possible nor productive. Even when the modeling process aspires to some level of objective reference to the architectural features of a site, it can only be a "tinker-toy," not a complete picture. Second, when framed as "representational" in the humanistic mode, models are not only inherently partial, but they are also necessarily subjective. Their process and use are guided by interpretative frameworks, referred to by Johanson as "hypothesis testing" and "visual argumentation." For example, in the 3D model of Ancient Rome, Diane Favro and Christopher Johanson begin with the hypothesis that the Roman funeral procession not only corresponds to some order of the built environment but also a certain symbolic order inscribed in it, the approach that they call "phenomenological analysis."⁵⁰ The utility of the model is not that it allows scholars to be immersed in the real environment but that rather it enables visually immersive arguments.

⁴⁸ Johanson, "Visualizing History," 407.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 410.

⁵⁰ Diane Favro and Christopher Johanson, "Death in Motion: Funeral Processions in the Roman Forum," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 69, no. 1 (2010): 12–37.

Similarly, our 3D model of Estrada Courts builds on Raúl Villa's thesis in his analysis of the "social practice and place-consciousness in Chicano urban culture:"

I wish to reiterate my main proposition, albeit in reverse: to broadly identify a historical continuity between and past and present circumstances influencing the production of barrio social space and its representations.

Only in identifying the tense relationship between socially deforming (barrioizing) and culturally affirming (barriological) spatial practices—which together produce the form and meaning of the barrio—will we come to understand the nuances of this recurring dialectic.⁵¹

The evidential value of the site is not only community solidarity but also the complexities and the contradictions of the community as expressed at the site. Despite the lack of certain details in the model, the choices for how to represent these layers are reflective of this dialectic, visually represented in the model with enough visual surrogates to effectively demonstrate the relationship between the deforming and affirming practices. As described in the above procedural discussion, this "recurring dialectic" is evident in the itemized layers of the site's detail, from the co-presence of the murals and *placas* to the diversity of the mural's genre. When these layers are brought together in the model, an overall schematic emerges in the final product: these individual elements altogether form "interior/exterior dynamic that define[s] the spatial organization of Estrada Courts."⁵² The social realist murals tend to face outward towards the busy streets that circumscribe the housing complex, while the pastoral scenes adorn the narrow spaces in

⁵¹ Raúl H. Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 8.

⁵² Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment*, 147.

between buildings. The *placas* are more visible in less prominent murals while the prominent ones remain in relatively pristine condition. Within this pattern, these murals document various moments in history that inform the formation of the Estrada Courts, but not necessarily in linear chronological order as is the case in The Great Wall of Los Angeles: from the Spanish settlement before the U.S.' annexation of the region to the Vietnam War protest. The purpose of visually representing their site-specificity is to show not only that they are there, but that the spatial organization of the murals in their internal/external schema corresponds to the analysis the *barrio* cultural practice as dialectical. Estrada Courts is unique as a mural environment because it makes legible the ordinariness of the *barrio* consciousness as well as those extraordinary moments of organized social protest, the dialectic of which is made clear when the complete collection of the murals is archived in manner that reflects their site-specificity. A representation that only documents the outward murals falsely implies that the *barrio* only speaks *from* and *as* the margins of society.⁵³

⁵³ See for example, the coverage of Estrada Courts in a popular Los Angeles-themed blog: "Photos: The Murals of Estrada Courts," *LAist*, accessed September 10, 2014, http://laist.com/2010/04/17/photos_the_murals_of_estrada_courts.php.



[Figure 9: a View of Another Interior Alleyway]

Furthermore, the model’s aspiration towards “being there” is necessarily an abstraction, and it is an abstraction based on the *only* the *units of interpretation* useful for the scope of the project: the murals and the buildings. To continue Johanson’s borrowing of “tinker toy” concept from the scientific method, I define *units of interpretation* as a humanistic variation of science’s “unit of analysis,” setting clear parameters for what is modeled and analyzed within the site. Unlike in the scientific method, however, the unit does not have *a priori* existence. Particularly for the reconstructions of contemporary built environments, while it is useful for the unit in the model to have a referent in the physical reality, the choice to use a particular surrogate to stand in for that unit is an interpretative one. If this project were designed not by Villa’s dialectical reading of the *barrio* but rather as a promotional resource for the department of cultural affairs to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the murals, perhaps we would have used the images of the murals in their pristine condition as photographed at that time, which is an archive that represents something entirely different.

Conclusion

I close with this rather minute point about units of interpretation because it shows what the model does and also what it fails to do. The question that I get asked repeatedly is why the model doesn't include the people who live there, and relatedly that the model 'feels sterile.'⁵⁴ Certainly, there are many good reasons to have included the residents, along with other details such as trees and bushes, as they are in fact, not difficult to achieve technically. But, not including placeholders for the residents is precisely the point: what the model attempts to visually demonstrate is the hypothesis that from this mural environment we may be able interpret Chicana/o subjectivities relationship to *barrios* as dialectical. This model is not about how Chicana/o subjectivities are inscribed in the residents' bodies themselves. As Favro and Johanson warn:

Every sensorial layer requires a method of citation and analysis, and a large measure of scholarly caution. How can it be proved that ancients experienced light in the same way as moderns? How does one add scholarly rigor to the simulation of smell or sound? Various sensorial additions to a simulation can detract if they are included as an afterthought, even if an illustrative one.⁵⁵

I claim that the 3D model effectively demonstrates the external/internal dynamic of the mural environment consistent with the interpretative model from which the site is reconstructed, but it also leaves some dissatisfaction about expressing some aspects of the

⁵⁴ These include key disciplines mentioned in this chapter: MLA 2013, AERI 2012, iSchool 2013, Digital Humanities Winter Institute 2012.

⁵⁵ Favro and Johanson, "Death in Motion," 16.

critique of ethnographic realism through absences. Returning to the issues raised by the PMLA special issue on “the theories of the ethnic archive,” even as this project imagines a possible answer to the problem of identity’s fixity in the archives through 3D modeling, this approach perhaps delivers too little. After all, the external/internal dynamic has been discussed already without the aid of a 3D model. Relatedly, just as one version of “ubiquitous computing” actually means the dissipation, and not the proliferation, of the interface into the everyday, doesn’t the very concept of the immersive associated with digital 3D models suggest that its units do not announce themselves as units? The more I try to make explicit the units of interpretation in the model, the more I turn to HyperCities layer to explain the patterns through “tours” and words. Furthermore, if the “real” Estrada Courts exists and thus there is no need to digitally reconstruct it, then what are the ways to push the boundaries of 3D modeling even further? What particular kinds of abstraction can the Chicana/o movement’s investment in the mythic homeland of Aztlán, as an example, instantiate in our 3D model’s representation of this built environment? Would that abstraction even require walls, buildings and boundaries? I have asked these questions but have not quite found a way or a proof of concept that makes such speculations legible in 3D models.



[Figure 10: “Walking Mural,” ASCO, 1972. Photograph by Harry Gamboa, Jr.]

But there is an example of such speculation and critique that can be said to be also site-specific and immersive. On Christmas Eve of 1972, the Chicana/o avant-garde collective known as ASCO staged a performance titled *Walking Mural*. The three of the four members of the collective, which includes Willie Herron and Gronk who painted the *Chicano Moratorium* mural at Estrada Courts, dressed up as darker and comical versions of recurring iconographies found in the *barrios*, including the Virgin of Guadalupe performed by Patssi Valdez. Together they formed a procession along Whittier Boulevard in East Los Angeles. It was a performance that Harry Gamboa, Jr. would later describe as “a multi-faceted mural that had grown bored with its environment and left.”⁵⁶ According to Chon Noriega, the performance is reflective of the group’s oeuvre of

⁵⁶ Jim Hinch, “Walking Mural: ASCO and the Ends of Chicano Art,” *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 23, 2012, <http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/walking-mural-asco-and-the-ends-of-chicano-art/>.

simultaneous commitment to “institutional critique,” protesting exclusion of Chicana/o artists by major art institutions in Los Angeles, and the “unique visual style and conceptual approach that contrasted, and even ridiculed, the Mexican-inspired political iconography of the Chicano civil-rights movement (1965-1975).”⁵⁷ Considering that ASCO remained “deeply engaged in that movement,” it is inaccurate to say that they dis-identified with the identity category of Chicana/o altogether. Rather, their works creatively expressed the critique of essentialist notions of identity categories, and the strategic necessities as well as the limits of cultural nationalism.

Along the same trajectory, such ambivalence also attends Harry Gamboa, Jr.’s “necessary skepticism” towards all that he has accumulated over the years, finding it “impossible” to narrate his life through an archive.⁵⁸ Returning to Raúl Villa once more in closing, even though there are good reasons to critique the “uncritical sentimentality” at times attached to the effort of documenting and “preserving the *barrio*,” he also argues against “dismissing ‘sentimental reasons’ and ‘powerful feelings’ as forms of false consciousness.”⁵⁹ Perhaps the limitation of our 3D model is not that it is not real enough but perhaps that it isn’t ambivalent enough in ways that exceeds the internal/external logic of the site.

⁵⁷ Chon A. Noriega, “‘Your Art Disgusts Me’: Early Asco, 1971—75,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 19 (2008): 114.

⁵⁸ Chon A. Noriega, “Preservation Matters,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 30, no. 1 (2005): 3.

⁵⁹ Villa, *Barrio-Logos*, 9–10.

CHAPTER 3

Performing Archive: The Archival Grains of *The North American Indian*

Introduction: Edward S. Curtis and *The North American Indian*

Writing in 1907, Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952), a prominent photo-documentarian whose lifelong ethnographic work on Native Americans is the focus of this chapter, states following in the opening moments of the first volume of *The North American Indian* (1907-1930):

The task of recording the descriptive material embodied in these volumes, and of preparing the photographs which accompany them, had its inception in 1898. Since that time, during each year, months of arduous labor have been spent in *accumulating the data necessary to form a comprehensive and permanent record* of all the important tribes of the United States and Alaska that still retain to a considerable degree their primitive customs and traditions. The great changes in practically every phase of the Indian's life that have taken place, especially within recent years, have been such that had *the time for collecting much of the material, both descriptive and illustrative, herein recorded, been delayed, it would have been lost forever.* [...]

The passing of every old man or woman means the passing of some tradition, some knowledge of sacred rites possessed by no other; consequently *the information that is to be gathered, for the benefit of future generations, respecting the mode of life of one of the great races of mankind, must be collected at once or the opportunity will be lost for all time.* It is this need that has inspired the present task.¹

When I first encountered this passage, I had to quickly confirm that these indeed are Curtis' own words, not a foreword included in the volume's later edition written by a more recent figure, because of the contemporary resonance of "data" and "information." Deployed in conjunction with "accumulating" and "gathered," the terms that Curtis uses here for the justification of his lifelong project resemble the familiar rhetoric in various

¹ Edward S. Curtis, "General Introduction," in *The North American Indian*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1907), xvi.
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000018&volume=1>. Emphasis added.

archival and documentation endeavors in the current digital archive fever. He speaks simultaneously with a sense of an archivist's urgency ("opportunity will be lost for all time"), a scholar's authority ("comprehensive and permanent"), and even a social activist's commitment to intervention ("especially within recent years," referring to the federal policies that have systematically displaced his subjects from their tribal lands). Also, as a resourceful self-made entrepreneur who strategically placed himself amongst wealthy patrons, intellectuals and politicians, Edward Curtis created an ethnographic work that spans twenty volumes containing over 2,000 images, which still remains as the most influential representation of Native Americans in the popular imaginary.

But why, despite Curtis' seemingly benevolent motivation of cultural preservation of and the distribution of knowledge about the Native Americans, has *The North American Indian* become a work of controversy since the second half of the twentieth century? Even the largely celebratory digital edition created by Northwestern University in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (from here on "digital edition") provides essays by scholars who warn the audience of its problematic foundation?² On the surface at least, Curtis's stated motivation does not depart too far from that of many community archive projects that I have previously referred. Beyond the archivist/scholar/activist rhetoric, his method of documenting can even be characterized as "participatory"—the hallmark of the community archiving movement—as he sought consult from various tribal representatives, on which his claim of scholarly legitimacy of his project rested.³

² "Edward S. Curtis's *The North American Indian*," 2003, <http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/>.

³ More on the notion of "participatory" in the next chapter in the context of "Archives 2.0" movement.

According to many of his contemporaries, he was a serious ethnologist as well as a masterful, self-taught, photographer.⁴ However, as David Beck explains in the digital edition, Curtis's work stands as an example of those items in popular culture that circulated during his time in "wild west shows, world fairs, art, literature and a variety of other venues, all of which helped lay the foundations for the American public's long-standing misinterpretation of American Indians."⁵ The political and the ideological context underwriting this "nostalgic market" were the policy of "forced assimilation" of Native Americans and the science of "social Darwinism," which merged to create and reinforce the "myth of the vanishing race."⁶

The archives such as *The North American Indian* pose unique challenges for libraries, museums and archives, as well as for the digital humanities. As a particularly influential cultural production created in the mode of documentation that has hold over the minoritarian subject who can be said to be particularly absent of political and cultural agency of visibility even in the contemporary multicultural U.S., *The North American Indian* is an archive that requires interventions in its reproduction and circulation today.⁷

It is the documentation such as this that animates the critique of *the archive* in

⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, one of many prominent patrons of the project, calls Curtis "an artist and a trained observer," in Theodore Roosevelt, "Preface," in *The North American Indian*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1907), xi.
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&size=2&id=nai.01.book.00000015&volume=1#nav>.

⁵ David, R.M. Beck, "The Myth of the Vanishing Race," *Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian*, 2001, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/essay2.html>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For the most part, it is not productive to describe in hierarchies the particular forms of racial injury faced by different racialized groups. But if the continuing presence of unequivocal racial stereotypes and epithets in such visibly mainstream institutions such as in sports entertainment is any indication, along with socio-economic data, Native Americans as a political body in the U.S. can claim very effectively the still necessary project of visibility politics in the realm of cultural representation in the multicultural U.S.

minoritarian discourse: its Western gaze upon the Other; its explicitly stated objective of capture and knowledge; its reinforcement of the myth; and most directly for this case study, *archives* as a method of othering and their *circumscription* of the representations that may follow.⁸ While the previous case study on Chicana/o murals grappled with the question of how to represent archives that celebrate and affirm minoritarian identity, this case study asks “what can we do with archives that essentialize and misrepresent?” In other words, what modes of interventions are available as interpretative models and as what we may call “archival agency” in its specific investment in locating alternate means of representation in the preservation and access of materials of cultural legacy?

As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith argues, in her exploration of interventionist methodologies, for indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis Foucault and Stuart Hall, “the Western cultural archive functions in ways which allow shifts and transformations to happen, quite radically at times, without the archive itself, and the modes of classifications and systems of representation contained within it, being destroyed.”⁹ Instead of locating in this statement a definitive and liberatory conception of agency in relation various archival endeavors, I want to rather emphasize its restraint and ambivalence: is archival agency only seemingly “transformative” as the archive always retains its “classifications and systems,” or is it actually “transformative” despite such retention? In what follows, I begin by contextualizing the issue of archival agency as it is currently being discussed in the archival field specifically in regards to Native American and indigenous cultural legacy. I then locate the opportunities for modeling a different

⁸ As I have described in the introductory chapter, I distinguish *the archive* as metaphor for discourse, and *archives* as collections of things.

⁹ Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Indigenous Peoples and Research* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 46.

digital archive of *The North American Indian*, specifically through content management systems and network visualizations to reimagine “access,” in relation to interface and navigation, for their utility in revealing the “archival grains” of archives such as *The North American Indian*.¹⁰ Through this digital intervention, I pursue a different conception of archival agency that is grounded in the discussions of identity’s “performativity.”

The Protocols for Native American Archival Materials

Perhaps owing to the official theme of “Archival R/Evolutions and Identities,” the 2008 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) held in San Francisco was particularly active with discussions around cultural diversity and social justice.¹¹ The most challenging and impassioned session that I attended was the “Forum on Protocols for Native American Archival Materials” (referred to here as PNAAM or “the Protocols”).¹² Initiated in 2006 by those working in the field of indigenous knowledge and tribal archives in the U.S. in order to bring attention to the issues pertaining to the ownership of and access to the artifacts and the records of tribal communities, the proposal put forth by PNAAM has been under review by an SAA special task force since early 2008. Specifically “developed to identify best professional practices for culturally responsive and care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal

¹⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). More on the “archival grain” later in this chapter.

¹¹ The details of the conference are available at <http://www.archivists.org/conference/sanfrancisco2008/AM08aboutProg.asp>.

¹² “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/index.html>.

repositories,” PNAAM includes proposals that are benignly, and also strategically, reflective of the general “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,” which includes commitment to “diversity,” “social responsibility,” “accountability,” and “history and memory.”¹³ By invoking these abstractly normative values characteristic of all public cultural institutions in the U.S., PNAAM most broadly advocates for “the consultation with and concurrence of tribal communities in decision and policies,” “community based research,” and “reciprocal education and training” in the handling of indigenous archival materials.¹⁴

Alongside of this reciprocity between SAA values and PNAAM, however, are the other details of the Protocols that are more challenging precisely because they require actual changes in archival practice that disrupt the very core conception of SAA’s understanding of archival access and preservation. Demonstrative of my attention to the intersection of minoritarian archives and digital technology as a site of provocation, not a resolution, this forum turned away from its initial spirit of cooperation to a more impassioned confrontation when a representative of a digitization and digital asset management firm offered the company’s technical services to the panelists of the forum. Calling such a gesture metaphorically akin to the distribution of “blanket of disease” by the colonial army to eradicate indigenous populations, the panel reminded the audience of the specificities of the Protocols that are largely incompatible with the notion of digital preservation and “open access” as means to empower the user and democratize access to knowledge. As stated in the Protocols’ document, “Our knowledge system doesn’t make

¹³ SAA Council, “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,” 2011, <http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>.

¹⁴ “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.”

sense without spirituality. We are asking for respect for a system of knowledge.”¹⁵

Reflecting the Protocols’ radically different understanding of the materiality of cultural artifacts, one panelist remarked that these materials “embody all of those who come in contact with them.” In this light, instead of safeguarding the indigenous provenance of these materials, providing access through digitization, not only physical exhibitions, violates the fundamental rights of the tribal members to maintain sovereignty over their archival materials.¹⁶

Thus, the Protocols’ more radical demands include: “rethinking the public accessibility and use of some materials;” “the need to reconsider copying, sharing and/or repatriation of certain materials;” and “the need to recognize and provide special treatment for culturally sensitive materials.”¹⁷ While the Protocols do not necessarily apply to *The North American Indian* in terms of its provenance and ownership, there is an important adjacent relationship. First, *The North American Indian* is an archive that tribal communities not only do not own, but actively disowns, for reasons briefly described above. As a documentation created by the Western subject for Western consumption, the examination of the historical context of *The North American Indian*

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ This notion of tribal sovereignty over archival materials may appear to be, on the surface, in line with the “possessive individualism” that is part and parcel of liberalism’s conception of political agency, which I am implicitly critiquing here throughout. However, I want to argue that it rather gestures towards the “distributed” and the “virtual” notions of cognition and embodiment as proposed by recent discussions around “materiality” specifically informed by the orientation of systems theory as well as the theories of the post-human. Describing these ways to theorize “new materialisms,” Diana Coole and Samantha Frost state, “Instead, the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces themselves manifest certain agentic capacities and in which the domain of unintended or unanticipated effects is considerably broadened. Matter is no longer imagined here as a massive, opaque plentitude but is recognized instead as indeterminate, constantly forming and reforming in unexpected ways.” Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

¹⁷ “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.”

reveals the complex web of discursive intersections, including the conventions of photography as the technology of capture at the time. PNAAM reveals the need for critical reflections on the current cultural politics of representation in the archives for not only archival materials of tribal provenance but also for the rhetoric and use of digital technology to promote more information and better knowledge. Here, I focus mainly on the issue of access: from the more granular level of navigation interface in content management systems (CMS) to the more expansive discourse of “open access.” This specific focus on CMS is also granted by the Protocols’ own exploration of Mukurtu, a CMS modeled after the “some of the best practices recommended by the contributors to the Protocols.”¹⁸ As the example of the *Plateau People’s Web Portal* shows, Mukurtu provides differentiated levels of access to digital collections, according to the user’s tribal membership and affiliation, and the ability to expose other dimensions of the items in the collection through metadata and additional items.¹⁹ In the following more technical section I detail the process of this case study’s effort to imagine a different kind of access for *The North American Indian*.

About the Project²⁰

In 2013, as a part of the digital scholarship initiative supported by the Mellon Foundation, Claremont University Consortium took on the challenge of reimagining *The*

¹⁸ Jennifer R. O’Neal, *Final Report: Native American Protocols Forum Working Group* (Chicago, Illinois: Society of American Archivists, 2012), 2.

<http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0112-V-I-NativeAmProtocolsForum.pdf>.

¹⁹ Plateau Center for American Indian Studies, Washington State University, “Plateau Peoples’ Web Portal,” accessed December 3, 2014, <http://plateauportal.wsulibs.wsu.edu/html/ppp/index.php>.; “Mukurtu,” accessed December 1, 2014, www.mukurtu.org.

²⁰ See Appendix II for details.

North American Indian through digital tools and platforms. This project was designed to serve as a pilot for future collaborative efforts that will involve faculty, librarians, technical staff and students at the liberal arts colleges of the Consortium. Led by Jacqueline Wernimont, a faculty member in the English department at Scripps College; Allegra Swift, Digital Initiatives Librarian; and Sam Kome, Research and Development Librarian, the project began with the following objectives: 1) leverage existing resources accessible in various digital collections; 2) connect faculty and students to the materials housed in special collections; and 3) develop a digital resource that contains pedagogic possibilities. Along with another graduate student and an independent scholar who respectively specialized in media studies and indigenous archives, I joined the team as a Digital Research and Scholarly Communications Fellow to contribute to the project from my critical race/ethnic studies, archival studies and digital humanities vantage point.

The project leaders and the seventeen faculty members currently teaching first-year undergraduate seminars decided that *The North American Indian* was the ideal source material to explore in meeting these goals of the initiative. First, the subject matter of the source material and its historical context was deemed to have much potential for productive discussions around culture, race, media, art and other broad topics that are addressed in the first-year undergraduate seminars taught by these faculty members. Second, the Claremont College Honnold-Mudd Library Special Collections currently holds one of the 272 complete editions of the twenty-volume set produced, which contains more than 2,000 photogravure, illustrations, field writings, portfolios and a comprehensive index of the eighty tribes covered in these volumes. Third, as I mentioned earlier, another complete edition had been already digitized by the

Northwestern University Library with funding from Institute for Library and Museum Services (IMLS) in 1998 and made accessible to the public through the Library of Congress' *American Memory* initiative in 2001.²¹ Furthermore, the Smithsonian Institute and the Archives of Traditional Music at the University of Indiana, Bloomington had made available other media created in conjunction *The North American Indian*.²²

As the project had a ten-week timeframe for the actual technical and content development, the availability of these digitized resources was crucial because we were able to repurpose these publicly available resources into our project (with proper credits) instead of digitizing the complete set Claremont from scratch. But more importantly, the existence of the digital edition, not only as a useful digital reproduction of the original source, but also as an interpretative approach in its own right, provided the initial frame of reference from which our version can experiment with new digital content platforms. In other words, unburdened by the task of digitizing and developing the most generically accessible digital edition of *The North American Indian*, our version would instead focus on the opportunities for formal transformation modeled after our own critical priorities and technological capacities. After all, the existing digital edition is, I would argue, *necessarily* intent on creating the most accessible edition possible, for it is designed with the general public in mind as its core audience. In our assessment, the digital edition evolves around Edward Curtis himself and his exceptional accomplishments as reflected in these volumes— however controversial—more than around his exemplary status as a

²¹ “Edward S. Curtis’s *The North American Indian*.”

²² For more background information of the project, see the previous version of this chapter co-authored with Jaqueline Wernimont: David J. Kim and Jacqueline Wernimont, “‘Performing Archive’: Identity, Participation, and Responsibility in the Ethnic Archive,” *Archive Journal*, no. 4 (2014), <http://www.archivejournal.net/issue/4/archives-remixed/performing-archive-identity-participation-and-responsibility-in-the-ethnic-archive/>.

subject of his own time. In design terms, the digital edition is organized by volumes and pages as Curtis had intended in the original production, and the supplementary essays that provide historical contexts and critical perspectives are given separate content space accessible from the main page; as such, these essays only minimally interact with the main content if at all (more on this later).

Remodeling the Source Material in Scalar

In my research for the project, I looked for other efforts to reimagine *The North American Indian*. “The Staging the Indian: Politics of Representation” (2002), an exhibition organized by Skidmore College, for example, invited contemporary Native American artists to critique and creatively respond to Curtis’ work and its lasting legacy, including works that satirically restaged the scenes of the source material in manner that exposes them as damaging stereotypes.²³ In 2014, Matika Wilbur, a photographer, launched a successful Kickstarter campaign called *Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America*, which documents the varied lives of contemporary Native Americans in all of 562 federally recognized tribes in the U.S., directly confronting the “myth of the vanishing race.”²⁴ If these two creative works can be considered as a “counter-archive” in its mode of resistance, then what are some other modes of reimagining an archive that misrepresents? Insofar as *The North American Indian* continues to be valued as a collectible item, preserved and circulated digitally or

²³ Jill D. Sweet et al., *Staging the Indian: The Politics of Representation* (Saratoga Springs, N.Y: Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skimore College, 2001); a review of the exhibit, Nancy Marie Mithlo, “Staging the Indian: The Politics of Representation,” *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 1 (2003): 156–61.

²⁴ Matika Wilbur, “Project 562,” accessed December 2, 2014, <http://project562.com/>.

otherwise, and, in the context of this project, used as source in various courses that place the work in different disciplinary contexts, one way of maneuvering its archival authority is by recasting its evidential logic. Revisiting Laura Kang here for her relevance for this different historical and cultural context, “the impossible questions of “What is she?” and “Who are they?” are turned around into other queries: How have Asian/American women been conjured, interpreted, and missed? What constituent parts make up Asian/American women?”²⁵ This remodeling is built on premise that the evidential value of *The North American Indian* is no longer about what this ethnographic work says of its subjects, but rather what it reveals about the discourse of race and the strategies deployed to document the essence of race.

More specifically, *The North American Indian* is recast as an example of what Brad Evans calls the “ethnographic imagination,” which he defines as “the experimentation, sometimes serious but often in the form of aesthetic dalliance, with new ways of perceiving, representing and producing structures of affiliation and difference.”²⁶ Arguing that the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century was a period marked by “people’s puzzlement over the failure of older conceptual categories to correlate with the experiences of modern life,” Evans proposes that “ethnographic imagination” is “a product of the *entanglement of art and anthropology* at the end of the century of the correspondence between cultural objectification and the delayed emergence of a relativistic notion of culture.”²⁷ In design terms, the project locates the opportunity for

²⁵ Laura Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2002), 26–27.

²⁶ Brad Evans, *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 7. Emphasis mine.

²⁷ Ibid.

intervention in revealing such “entanglement of art and anthropology” that *The North American Indian* represents through the affordances of CMS to create the type of access that distinguishes itself from the “original order” of the previous digital edition: Will it be as linear as the authoritative digital edition? Will it simply find a solution in including even more critical essays and historical contexts? How do we encourage undergraduates to practice new ways of reading ethnic archives such as *The North American Indian*?

In order to locate the possibilities in addressing these questions in currently existing tools and platforms, the project considered two content management systems widely used in digital scholarship, Omeka and Scalar, focusing on their respective capacities to offer significant alterations to the existing digital edition. While Omeka and its set of plugins allow well-organized exhibits and well-formed descriptive metadata for each item, the final outcome would have resembled the version that already exists. Omeka is also limited in its capacity to link and embed digital assets stored elsewhere, as well as in the author’s ability to link related items in manner that allows transition from one critical context to another. In contrast, as a more formal experimentation with narrative possibilities in the database, Scalar contained more opportunities for the project. Scalar is a “multimodal authoring platform” whose advantages have been described as the ability to: “(1) facilitate the aggregation of web-based content, (2) responsibly embed and share that content, (3) interpret the content in a flexible and open way, (4) identify and create relationships between the content, and (5) express those relationships through a variety of formats, genres, views, and arrangements.”²⁸ The technical team aggregated

²⁸ Craig Dietrich and Jentery Sayers, “After the Document Model for Scholarly Communication: Some Considerations for Authoring with Rich Media,” *Digital Studies* 3.2 (2012), http://www.digitalstudies.org/ojs/index.php/digital_studies/article/view/234/301.

the media files and their metadata into our Scalar database by using Application Programming Interface (API), which allows content management systems to ingest and embed, as opposed to download and thus unrightfully “own,” these digital assets.²⁹

As the technical team worked to gather various Curtis collections, including the complete digitized set and the supplementary audio and video footage, the faculty members at Claremont contributed a series of essays that broadly address the history and the lasting legacy of *The North American Indian* as they relate to the discussions of representation, technology, the photographic form and ideology of race and ethnicity in the U.S. The section authored by Ken Gonzalez-Day, for example, exposes Curtis’s photographic strategy, with particular attention to the ways in which “Curtis encouraged his models to stage, restage, or perform dances or ceremonies out of season and out of context” and how Curtis “believed that performing for the camera could serve as a way of preserving cultural traditions while there was still a living memory of them.”³⁰ Heather Blackmore, a graduate fellow with cinematic arts background, brought her considerable knowledge of early twentieth media and photographic conventions to bear on this discussion of Curtis’s work, producing an instructive video for the undergraduate audience on how to “read” the photographs presented here.³¹ Ulia Gosart, whose recent doctoral research in archival studies focuses on the preservation of indigenous knowledge, contributed her expertise on community archiving that leaves open future

²⁹ In simple terms, API is the protocol by which content platforms such as Scalar takes the materials made accessible and sharable in other databases, as well as the data associated with these materials, and embeds them into our content without claiming ownership of those materials (more on this later).

³⁰ Ken Gonzalez-Day, “Visualizing the ‘Vanishing Race:’ The Photogravures of Edward S. Curtis,” 2012, <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/performingarchive/visualizingvanishingraceexhibit>.

³¹ Heather Blackmore, “Media, Technology and Mediations,” 2012. <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/performingarchive/media-technology-and-mediations>.

possibilities for collaborations with tribal members as counter narratives to *The North American Indian*.³² In the Scalar version, these critical perspectives, as opposed to volumes and pages, form the main access points. These discussions take advantage of Scalar's ability to link related media files in manner that fundamentally impacts navigation. If one takes interest in one specific item mentioned in an essay, or a "path," one can depart from that path and follow a different path that also contains that image but in a different context.

While the aforementioned examples of counter-archives represent the creative effort towards exposing misrepresentations and displacing them with more nuanced, perhaps even more 'accurate' representations, the Scalar version's reorientation of the evidential value of the source material in its "entanglements" follows what Ann Laura Stoler has called the practice of "reading along the archival grain."³³ In her analysis of the colonial archives of the Dutch Indies of the nineteenth century, she seeks ways of reading the archives and their meaning beyond their inaccuracies and misrepresentations. Her archival method "looks to the archives as condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety rather than as skewed and biased sources. These colonial archives were both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves."³⁴ By this, she does not mean to locate some inner truth or hidden meanings. Rather, the "archival grain" is located in the "archival form:" "prose style, repetitive refrain, the arts of persuasion, affective strains that shape 'rational' response,

³² Ulia Gosart, "Consulting with Tribes as Part of Archive Development," 2012. <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/performingarchive/Tribes%20and%20Archive%20Development>.

³³ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

categories of confidentiality and classification, and not least, genres of documentation.”³⁵

Scalar’s non-linearity is one way of reimagining the source in the manner of “reading along the archival grain.” For the active reader who may seek out different paths, it offers more perspective into its “entanglement,” and for the passive reader, the heavily contextualized Scalar version maintains these issues of form in the background.

Specifically, non-linearity is the mode through which “archival grains” are brought into view. Admittedly, certain aspects of usability suffer in this remodeling of *The North American Indian*. Although a user can browse the source material by volumes, as one would in the prior digital edition, it is not the primary access point. As a pilot project that is not only about the source material itself but also about digital scholarship more broadly, the Scalar version stands not as a triumphant example of digital affordances of the CMS, but rather as a reminder of the trade-offs of formal transformations, which I will return to later.³⁶

Network Visualization and the Archival Grain

Another experimentation with digital tools and platforms in the effort to reimagine the Curtis archive in this case study is through network visualization.³⁷ While the redesign conceived through the Scalar platform represents the possibilities for revealing the “archival grains” of the source material at the macro-level of interface and navigation, the second part of this discussion explores network visualization to reveal

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ This comment about Scalar’s usability is actually more about the viability of this platform as digital archive. Simply, Omeka and Scalar does different things. More on non-linearity as critical intervention later.

³⁷ I thank Zoe Borovsky at UCLA for her consultation.

“archival grains” at a more micro-level. It began as my effort to design a prototype for an interface that can visualize the “archival grains” of the source material without compromising too much usability. The initial idea behind it came through a conversation I had with a colleague on the Getty Research Institute’s network visualization based on the provenance records of one of its collections, which may, theoretically, be used as an interface for browsing the collection.³⁸ More precisely, I wanted to explore if Evans’ notion of the “entanglement of art and anthropology” can be represented through the graphical form of networks.³⁹ As the physicist Mark Newman explains, “a network is, in its simplest form, a collection of points joined together in pairs by lines. In the jargon of the field, the points are referred to as *vertices*, or *nodes*, and the lines are referred to as *edges*.”⁴⁰ Emphasizing the relevance of networks in all contexts that can be described as a “system,” he states, “the pattern of connections in a given system can be represented as a network, the components of the system being the network vertices, and the connections the edges.”⁴¹

³⁸ “Network Diagram of Agents Connecting the British, Belgian, Dutch, and French Auction Markets from 1801-20 Using 230,000 Records from the Getty Provenance Index Databases,” *The Getty Research Institute*, accessed December 11, 2014.
<http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/zoomify/index.html>.

³⁹ Though I am not an expert in this area, I have been intrigued by its capacity to expose patterns in a dataset ever since my participation in the *Research-oriented Social Environment (RoSE)* project in 2009, a part of the broader *Transliterations Project* at the University of California-Santa Barbara led by Alan Liu as PI. What I describe here as “data-izing the images” and the idea of using network visualization as an interface for scholarly content come from my involvement in the metadata design group. From its prospectus, RoSE is a system for tracking and integrating relations between people and documents (as well as groups) in a combined “social-document graph” (not just a “social graph”). It allows users to learn from the relationships between people-and-documents, people-and-people, and documents-and-documents even before, or simultaneous with, drilling down to full-text and full-profile-page resources (through future links to external repositories). “Transliterations, RoSE Prospectus,” accessed December 16, 2014.
<http://transliterations.english.ucsb.edu/post/research-project/rose/prospectus>.

⁴⁰ Mark Newman, *Networks: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 2.

In addition to the explanation of the method from the sciences from which it originates, the digital humanities work in this area cites Franco Moretti's now foundational methodological approach of "distant reading," which he describes as a "specific form of knowledge: fewer elements, hence a sharper sense of their overall interconnection. Shapes. Relations, Structures, Forms. Models."⁴² Moretti's "distant reading" has paved the way for literary studies and other humanities disciplines to analyze historical and temporal data, spatial data, encoded literary texts and more recently social media data. *Mapping the Republic of Letters* at Stanford is one of the most prominent examples of network analysis in digital humanities, adjoining the representational forms of networks and maps to visualize patterns in the data comprised of correspondence records of prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century.⁴³ More accessible examples, in terms of scale and resources, have been generated by individual scholars and researchers such as Elijah Meeks, Scott Weingart, and Annette Markham, who have generously shared their methodological frameworks and technical how-to's with novices such as myself through their blog posts.⁴⁴

In these discussions, the elements of "reduction" and "abstraction" emerge as both the opportunity and the challenge of network analysis. Describing the conceptual process

⁴² Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London; New York: Verso, 2007).

⁴³ "Mapping the Republic of Letters," 2013, <http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/index.html>.

⁴⁴ Elijah Meeks, "Learning Network Analysis and Representation with a Pedagogical Toy," *Digital Humanities Specialist*, February 4, 2014, <https://dhs.stanford.edu/algorithmic-literacy/learning-network-analysis-and-representation-with-a-pedagogical-toy/>; Annette Markham, "From Network Analysis to Network Sensibilities: Part I," November 30, 2011, <http://www.markham.internetinquiry.org/2011/11/from-network-analysis-to-network-sensibilities-part-i/>; Scott B. Weingart, "Demystifying Networks, Parts I & II," *Journal of Digital Humanities*, March 15, 2012, <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/demystifying-networks-by-scott-weingart/>.

behind one of his case studies, the map of “village narratives” in nineteenth-century British literature, Moretti states,

you *reduce* the text to a few elements, and *abstract* them from the narrative flow, and construct a new, *artificial* object like the maps that I have discussing. And with a little luck, these maps will be more than the sum of their parts: they will possess ‘emerging’ qualities, which were not visible at the lower level.⁴⁵

Despite the rather obvious methodological differences between literary studies and physics, Moretti’s emphasis on reduction and abstraction is echoed in Newman’s description: “A network is a simplified representation that reduces a system to an abstract structure capturing only the basics of connection patterns and little else. [...] A lot of information is usually lost in the process of reducing a full system to a network representation.”⁴⁶ In both cases, the process of abstraction and reduction is where interpretation takes place, and it occurs at both the level of data and at the level of visualization. As I detail the process below, the fundamental challenge for my prototype is that the “data” of my primary source are images. Thus, the process requires an interpretative framework that guides the process of abstracting the images to linguistic vocabularies, which then can be formulated as data that is legible according to convention of nodes and edges of networks. I describe this process simply as “data-izing the images,” in which I take the titles and the descriptions of the images and then arrange them as [title]-[represents]-[description]. This interpretative framework must also provide means of parameterizing the scope of image’s meaning. Furthermore, the process needs to consider the relationship between this data and the graphical form of

⁴⁵ Moretti, 53. Emphasis original.

⁴⁶ Newman, 2.

networks as another layer of abstraction: Will it simply rely on the tools to let data ‘emerge’ as networks, or will it attempt to perform critique through manipulating both the algorithm and the graphical options of these tools? Again, as the objective is creating an interface that allows navigation in/through “archival grains,” this prototype is an attempt to link the functional and the interpretative aspects, or more precisely, demonstrate that the use of functional provisions are interpretative acts.

The basis for abstraction for this network analysis comes from Allan Sekula’s influential discussion of photographic images.⁴⁷ First, he argues that “we need a historically grounded sociology of the image, both in the valorized realm of high art and in the culture at large.”⁴⁸ While it is tempting to view the meaning of a photographic image as inherent to itself, especially in regards to photographic documentations (as opposed artistic photographs), a photograph is just as inscriptive and performative as any other representational forms: “if we accept the fundamental premise that information is the outcome of a culturally determined relationship, then we can no longer ascribe an intrinsic or universal meaning to the photographic image.”⁴⁹ Second, Sekula’s theories on photographic meaning are particularly invested in its function construction of social categories, as described here more broadly: “For this woman, the photograph is unmarked as message, is a ‘non-message’, until it is framed linguistically by the anthropologist. A metalinguistic proposition such as ‘This is a message,’ or, ‘this stands for your son,’ is

⁴⁷ Using Allen Sekula’s theory as the framework, of course, is a completely subjective one, as there are many foundational theories available for the task of reading photographs as texts, including those from John Tagg and W.J.T. Mitchell to name just a few.

⁴⁸ Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” *Artforum* 13, no. 5 (1975), 39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 38

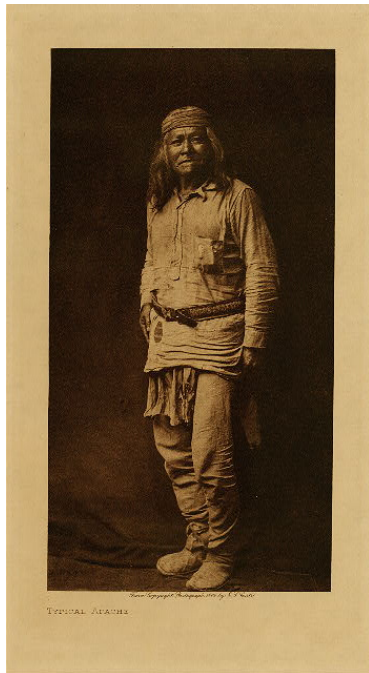
necessary if the snapshot is to be read.”⁵⁰ For Sekula, such moments of “metalinguistic proposition(s)” are not necessarily the exceptional qualities of anthropological photographs, but rather, they are useful because they make explicit what is operating in all photographic documentations.

Returning to my initial motive here, then, which was to expose and visualize the “archival grains” in Curtis’ photographs in order to prototype a different kind of interface for accessing them, I began by “data-izing the images” of human subjects (as opposed to of landscapes) in the first volume of *The North American Indian*. Although there are many layers embedded in the logic of Curtis’s attempt to capture the essence of the “vanishing race,” the most explicit and thus accessible layer is the titles that he assigns to his images. In terms of their lasting legacy, the descriptive metadata created by the Library of Congress also functions as “metalinguistic proposition(s)” for these images. Some titles given by Curtis immediately stood out during this process, such as “Typical Apache” and “Typical Navaho.” Unfortunately, some images did not contain Library of Congress descriptive metadata, in which case I had to resort to approximating the method of descriptions used for other images, which, unsurprisingly, focused primarily on gender and clothing, and at times certain action.⁵¹ To be clear about the relationship between presuppositions behind the abstraction at this level of data and the parameters that I have set, first, I am gesturing towards the need to separate, at least momentarily, the *being* of the images from their *representations*. As Sekula and others have argued, the photographic image’s particular epistemic authority is that it often erases this distinction,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39

⁵¹ As I describe below, the Library of Congress’s convention of focusing on clothing and gender in and of itself is not specific to this collection. Thus, ultimately my approximation of Library of Congress’s description does not add or subtract from the veracity of my data in the final instance.

which then establishes the ontological “real” of the photographed subject. Second, I am linking the “being” as represented metalinguistically in the titles to the descriptions of the photographs by the Library of Congress: the “Typical Apache,” for example, is an “old man in native dress” [Figure 1]. In relation to the broader goal of the case study as a whole, I am simply proposing that these layers of image titles and descriptions are also part of the “archival grain.”



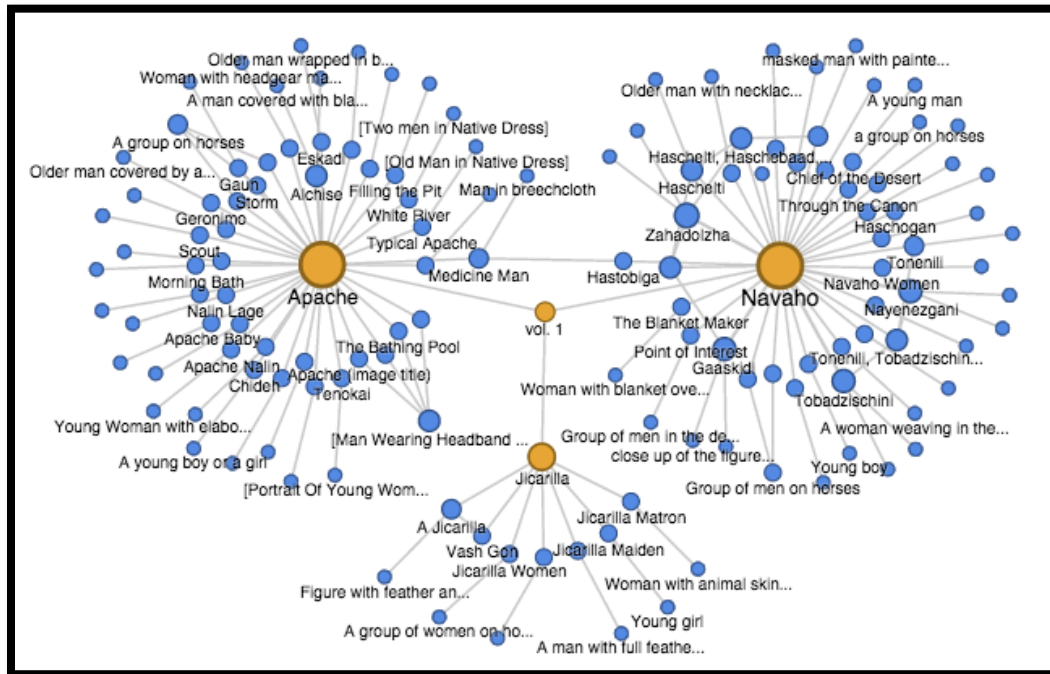
[Figure 11: “Typical Apache,” Edward S. Curtis; Library of Congress describes the image as “old man in native dress.”]⁵²

As I reflect on my own process, I have come to understand some limitations of the data itself. First, the convention of both the titles and the descriptive metadata, in retrospect, does not reveal, in and of itself, any identifiable logic that can be said to be

⁵² “Typical Apache,” in volume 1 of *The North American Indian*.
<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=1&id=nai.01.book.00000032.p&volume=1>

particular to the representation of Native Americans. The fact that the Library of Congress focuses on gender and clothing is not specific to Native Americans in my estimation. The data simply follows and confirms what Sekula has said is the operation of all photographic documentation. There are a few patterns that emerge in the visualization, as I discuss below, but they are minimal, and they could have been gathered without this method. The process of data-izing the images only helped insofar as it forced me to pay extra attention to the details during the process. In retrospect, insofar as network analysis is about discovering patterns otherwise hidden, a more useful experimentation would have been to data-ize what is not explicitly stated: for example, the affective dimensions, or those “sentiments expressed and ascribed as social interpretations” that are also in the images.⁵³ I could have described the facial expressions of the posing subjects, even in simple terms, from which I can perhaps arrive at an analysis of the affective registers behind the Curtis’s attempt to put forth the “myth of the vanishing race.”

⁵³ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 33.

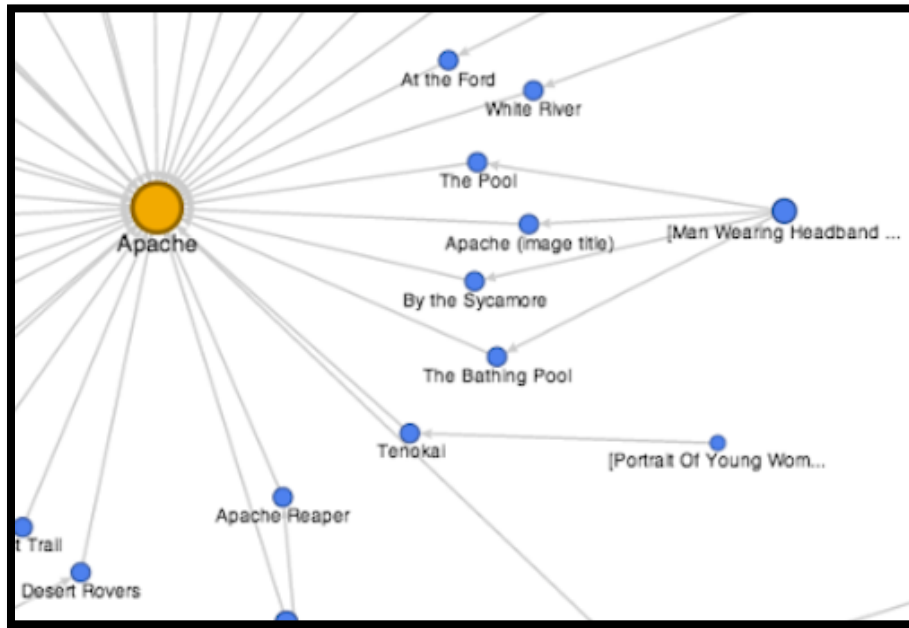


[Figure 12: Network Visualization of *The North American Indian*, volume 1]⁵⁴

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind what Elijah Meeks wishes to distinguish between “network representations” and “network analysis” for the digital humanists exploring this approach: the former simply demonstrates what we already know and the latter quantitatively analyzes the data algorithmically presents the findings in the graphical form of networks (more on this later). The series of concentric circles generated by Google Network Graphs simply reflect how the data is constructed [Figure 2]. The nodes that represent the tribes form the centers because they contain the highest number of connections, which are the titles of the images link to the tribes. The titles are linked to the nodes of outer circles, which represent the Library of Congress descriptions. This layout, again, is predetermined by data, because these descriptions are only linked to the titles, and only very occasionally do they form connections to each other. It also

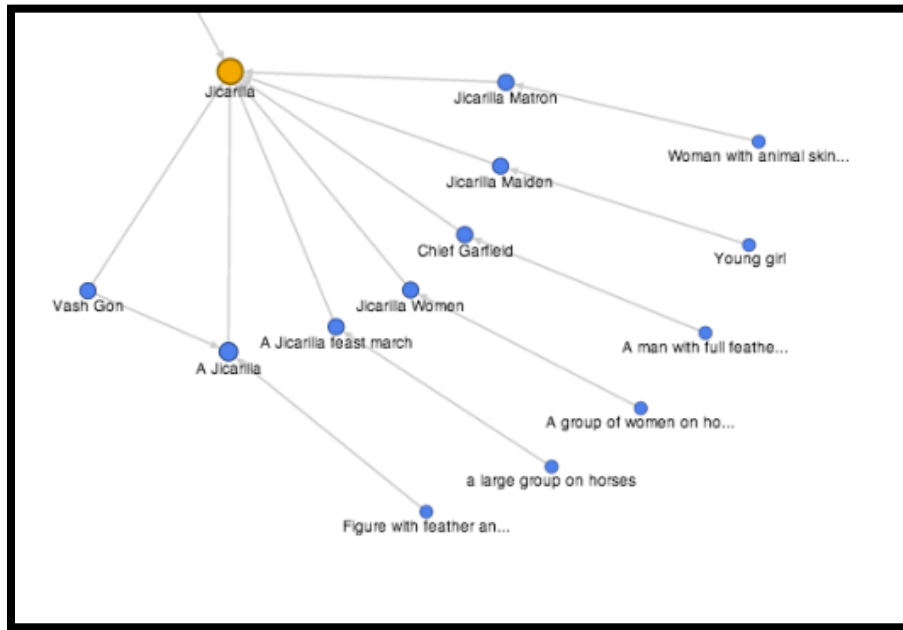
⁵⁴ Created with Google Network Graph.

represents the most spatially efficient distribution the nodes. The following three close-up views [Figures 3-5] from the overall graph above show what I think are some patterns in the visualization, however minimal.



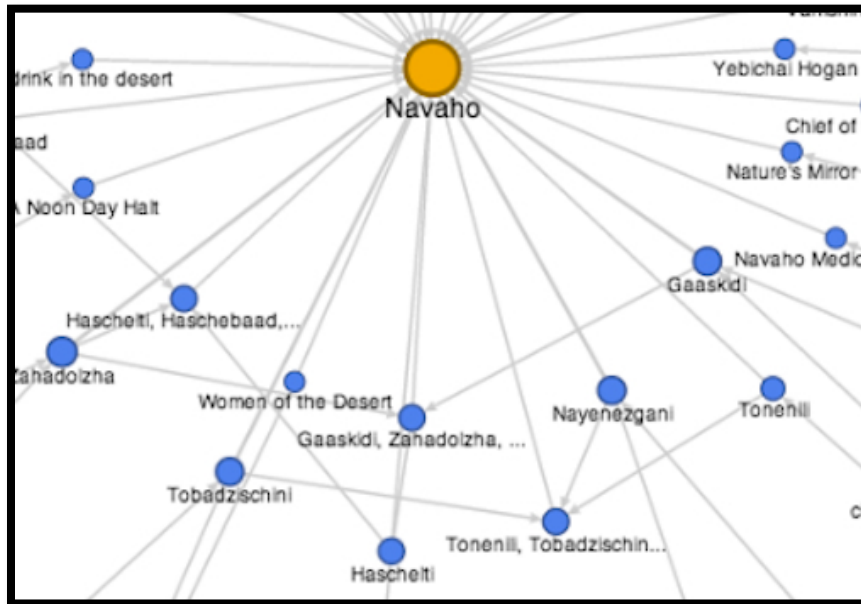
[Figure 13: “Man Wearing Headband and Breechcloth”]

Out of the 35 unique nodes in the circle of Apache, the subject described as "Man Wearing Headband and Breechcloth" (Library of Congress of description) is represented in 4 of the images. One of the titles describes him simply as "Apache" while other image titles focus on nature and the features of the landscape in the images: "By the Sycamore" "Bathing Pool" and "The Pool." Closer examination of these images reveals that it is most likely that the same subject is featured in all of them.



[Figure 14: “Jicarilla”]

Out of the three tribes documented in volume one, the Jicarilla tribe is noticeably depicted the least: Curtis includes only 7 images that contain human subjects for this tribe. Looking at this node closer, we also see that 5 out of the 7 images are representations of figures explicitly described as woman by the titles. Why is this tribe particularly gendered in this way? Does this support the claim that Jicarilla is a traditionally matrilineal society? If so, how do we account for the lack of emphasis on women in documentation of the Navajo tribe, despite that tribe also being matrilineal?



[Figure 15: "Gaaskidi"]

For the images that comprise the Navaho, the network contains far more multiple connections than the other tribes. The areas within the network that contain these multiple connections are primarily the images of the subjects performing as deities for ceremonial rituals: "Haschelti," "Haschenzhini," "Gaaskidi," etc. The visualization shows that while deity figures are only referred to once for the Apache and none for the Jicarilla, 12 out of the total 33 images of the Navaho are of these fully masked figures, most of them depicted in multiple images. Without drawing any definitive analysis from this finding, one can simply state that this "distant view" reveals the unevenness with which Curtis "scientifically" documented the tribes. Is the Navaho tribe particularly more invested in these ceremonies than the other tribes are? Again, the analytical purchase of this network representation of the first volume of *The North American Indian* is very limited. It only amounts to a circular as opposed to linear representation of the images

contained in it without delivering a compelling critique. The idea of exposing the “archival grain” in the metalinguistic layer of the images and taking that exposure to critically matter for navigation and access, perhaps, is a goal too lofty given my limited expertise. Despite the limited outcome, or the lack of “luck” as Moretti would say, I do want to stand by at least the aspiration behind it, which I now apply towards a different set of source materials for a different kind of network: the biographical work on Edward Curtis and his social network behind the making of *The North American Indian*.

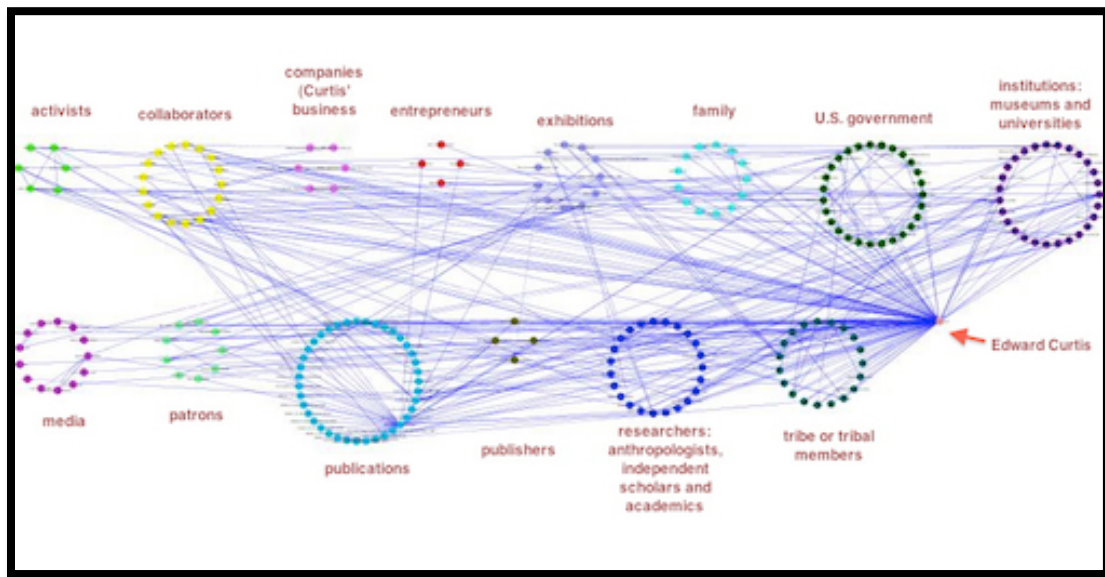
Edward Curtis’s Social Network

If the limitation of this experimentation begins with data itself—my premise that metalinguistic layer contains patterns specific to this content—then what about the data of Curtis’s social network? As scholars in both the social sciences and the humanities can appreciate, historical and social context is infinite. Lowering the threshold from the analytical to the demonstrative, I wanted to show the complexity of Edward Curtis’s social connections through the visualization of the figures, events and institutions that played a major role in the original production of *The North American Indian*. Mick Gidley’s *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated*, itself a work of arduous archival research and one of the most authoritative works thus far on the subject, sets the parameters of the data for this visualization.⁵⁵ We entered the names of the individuals, events and institutions mentioned in various sections of Gidley’s biographical sketch of Curtis in our spreadsheet.⁵⁶ Because Cytoscape allows more

⁵⁵ Mick Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Heather Blackmore and I are responsible for creating this data.

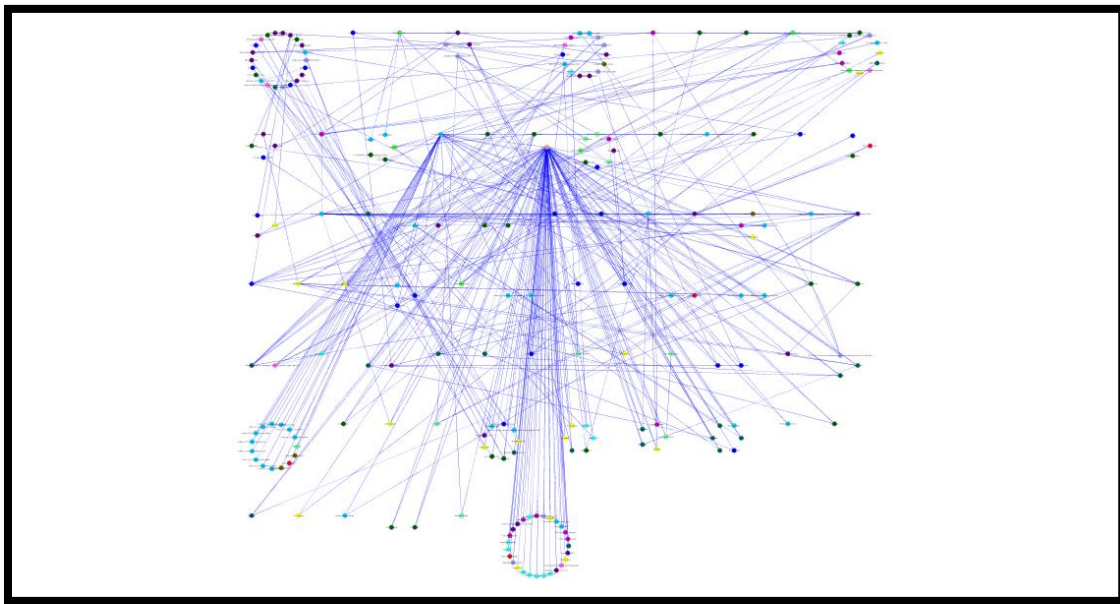
graphical maneuvers in the visualization, each entity was then assigned a category, such as “government,” “patrons,” “family,” “museums and universities,” etc. The objective was to use these categories and their connections to situate *The North American Indian* in its historical context as represented by these different categories (or “node attributes” in Cytoscape) and their web of influence.



[Figure 16: Edward Curtis Social Network by “Node Attributes”]

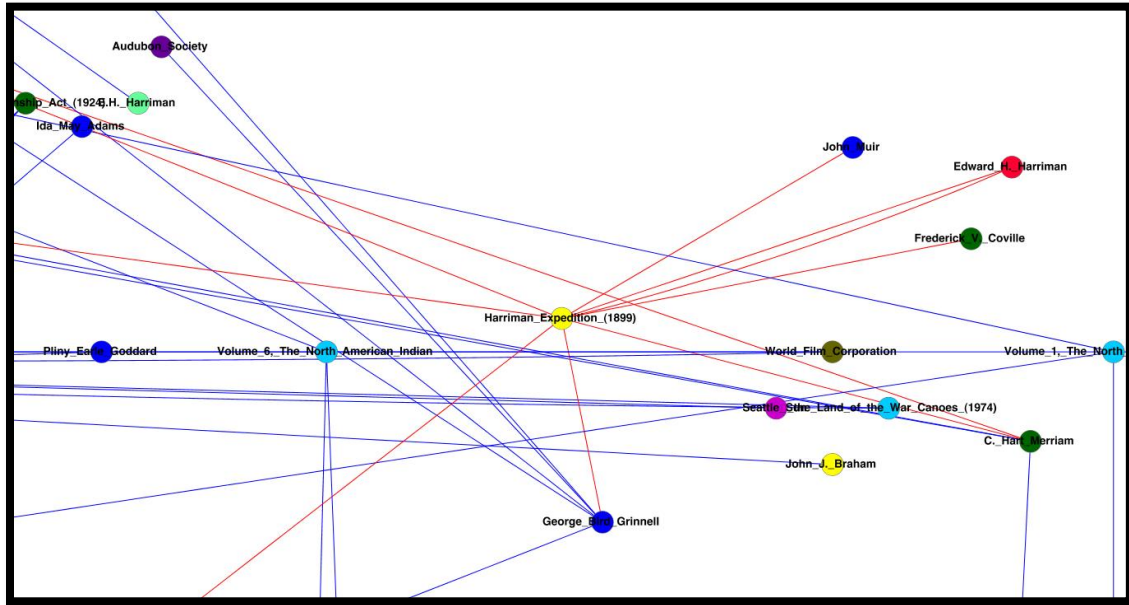
This visualization groups nodes in the dataset by "node attributes" that we applied to categorize the persons, collective entities and events [Figure 6]. The distance between the nodes in this visualization does not reflect any analysis of the entity's level of influence or connectedness. The colors of the nodes have been manually selected and they are simply to distinguish different types. From the size of the circles formed by these groups, however, we can estimate the frequency of the node types mentioned in the dataset.

Next, we wanted to see connectivity *across* the groups that we assigned by types. Network analysis tools such as Cytoscape generate connectivity in several statistical modes based on “node degrees.” As Scott Weingart helpfully explains in plain language, “a node’s degree is, simply, how many edges it is connected to. Generally, this also correlates to how many neighbors a node has, where a node’s neighborhood is those other nodes connected directly to it by an edge.”⁵⁷ For my data, generating a network visualization based on “centrality,” or “how important nodes are in a network,” is rather predictable because “Edward Curtis” will be at the center given that this is *his* social network. Thus, I used “neighborhood connectivity” in Cytoscape to visualize any clusters of nodes that may be formed alongside of “Edward Curtis” at the center [Figure 17].



[Figure 17: Edward Curtis Social Network by “Neighborhood Connectivity”]

⁵⁷ Weingart, “Demystifying Networks, Parts I & II.”



[Figure 18: "Harriman Expedition" in "Neighborhood Connectivity"]

This view focuses on one area of the entire network. We can see how the “Harriman Expedition (1899)” brought Edward Curtis in contact with a number prominent figures of his time: John Muir, the famous naturalist; Frederick Coville, the Chief Botanist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and Grover Gilbert, a geologist. George Grinnell, who shortly after this trip formed the *Audubon Society* and served as the editor of *Forest and Stream*, played an important supportive role in the development of *The North American Indian*, both financially and politically.

While these visualizations do not definitively identify those entities that can be said to have the most influence within Edward Curtis's social network, they do provide a helpful graphical accompaniment to our basic understanding that *The North American Indian* was not a pursuit of a single photographer: it was also a business venture and an outlet for the interests of various stakeholders, reflective of the broader socio-political

and academic investments in the documentation and the preservation the Native American culture. It is perhaps difficult to determine such factors of influence or centrality in any analysis of social networks, though there are many measures to approximate them. As an extreme example, the quantitative measurement of the node representing Theodore Roosevelt—who is directly connected to Edward Curtis in our dataset through direct correspondence and through Roosevelt’s contribution of the foreword to *The North American Indian*—should perhaps include edges to every single node in our dataset. Also important is the fact that this visualization is inherently biased based on its source. It reflects Mick Gidley’s attention to these prominent figures as he mentions them in the biography.⁵⁸

Besides the limitations of both sections above that begin with the premise of data itself, this experimentation with network visualization calls into question the possibility of critiquing “the archive that misrepresents” in this way if by archive I mean not only metaphor for discourse, but again an actual knowledge form. The “gold standard,” so to speak, of formal transformation is critique performed in and through the form, which becomes less convincing the more one has to explain in language, external to the form itself, what the critique is. What I found productive about my previous case study with 3D modeling is that the critique of external/internal dynamic is effectively demonstrated in the model’s navigational function itself. The “archival grain” in this case study as the

⁵⁸ Scott Weingart also mentions a project similar what I am attempting here: “A historian of science might generate a correspondence network from early modern letters currently held in Oxford’s library. In fact, this is currently happening, and the resulting resource will be invaluable. Unfortunately, centrality scores generated from nodes in that early modern letter writing network will more accurately reflect the whims of Oxford editors and collectors over the years, rather than the underlying correspondence network itself. Oxford scholars over the years selected certain collections of letters, be they from Great People or sent to or from Oxford, and that choice of what to hold at Oxford libraries will bias centrality scores toward Oxford-based scholars, Great People, and whatever else was selected for.” Ibid.

mode of critique and intervention perhaps remains too metaphorical in these efforts to reimagine the source: non-linearity and networks. Of course, all knowledge representations are metaphorical, but as Johanna Drucker states, “a basic distinction can be made between visualizations that are representations of information already known and those that are knowledge generators capable of creating new information through their use.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, the conventions of different kinds of visual forms of knowledge we have become familiar with and now we are trying to manipulate, according Drucker, are bound to carry the legacy of the various knowledge production to come forth during period of the Enlightenment.⁶⁰ To what extent, then, can digital archives, an actual form, be transformative, and be still legible as archives? While the issue of “archival agency” applies to all of case studies, my own limitations here provide the opportune time to reflect on the type of interventions that are possible, as I discuss below. In the spirit of experimentation, however, I would close this section with Moretti’s own concluding remark: “Much remains to be done, of course, on the compatibility of the various models, and the explanatory hierarchy to be established among them. But right now, opening new conceptual possibilities seemed more important than justifying them in every detail.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 65.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶¹ Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 92.

Performing Archive

With such admission of many limitations present here, I then return to the initial question of “What can we do with archives that misrepresent?” While I am not implying that the limitations of this case study in its attempt to reimagine the Curtis archive must be indicative of all efforts towards performing interventions through digital tools and platforms, my struggle here is perhaps more useful as the opportunity to reflect broadly on the relationship between digital affordances and the minoritarian critique of identity. As the previous case study with 3D modeling in many ways failed to capture the affective dimensions of the “Chicana/o mural environment,” this case study’s wrestling with the limitations of non-linearity in CMS and the difficulty of revealing the “archival grains” through network visualizations leads me to question the level of agency I have in my effort to justify my methodologies and its viability for my set of critiques as both scholar and practitioner. The fact that these are exploratory case studies dealing with emerging tools and approaches alone often does not satisfy my own standards for intervention, and much less for “social justice,” or “transformative:” terms often used in conjunction with minoritarian archival projects and the digital humanities projects. The project team, then, has assigned the title, “Performing Archive,” for several reasons that are descriptive of the agency of those who develop digital projects of many kinds as interventions of some shape or form, and also the agency of the minoritarian subject who many participate in such endeavors of cultural preservation and access. The purpose of this framing is to move away from the more triumphant claims of the type of work currently being engaged by both archivists and digital humanists, not to dismiss them wholesale but to situate

them more discursively and ambivalently, which the recent trajectory of the scholarship on *The North American Indian* also effectively demonstrates.

First, the “performing” of the project’s title refers to the staged or the inaccurate nature of Curtis’s photographs: the point most directly raised by the essay by Ken Gonzalez-Day as mentioned above. The performed nature of these images has been the basis for critiquing the legacy of this work as simultaneously inauthentic (against the Curtis’s claims of “objectivity”) and essentialist (along the Curtis’s claims of “in nature.”) More recent considerations, however, have also questioned the tendency to view Edward Curtis as the sole agent in the scene’s making and his photographic subject as only a victim of it. According to Shamoan Zamir, such framing offered by Mick Gidley and Christopher Lyman, two of the most prominent historians on the subject, “characterizes the work primarily in terms of ‘the formation and perpetuation of an iconography,’ concluding that the images must be seen as ‘reconstructions or, more accurately, constructions produced as the behest of a prevailing ideology.’”⁶² Arguing that “to dismiss the photographs in *The North American Indian* as fabrications is, therefore, to hold to conceptualizations of cultural authenticity and historical accuracy too narrow to allow the varied historical forms of Native agency to come into view,” Zamir suggests that instead, we can also account for the ways in which Curtis’s subjects were not singularly victims of his exploitation but also a “newly emergent” class of Native American “leaders and cultural brokers.”⁶³ For Zamir, the “performance” of these leaders also indicates their “skillful command of documentary evidence,” and that their

⁶² Shamoan Zamir, “Native Agency and the Making of ‘The North American Indian’: Alexander B. Upshaw and Edward S. Curtis,” *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2007): 615.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 638, 618.

participation in Curtis's project perhaps also "was the vehicle for a genuine self-expression."⁶⁴ Aaron Glass similarly argues that while it is important to recognize the insights of "the dominant strain of criticism of Curtis over the past 25 years," which has highlighted the fact of staging for the purposes of "constructing a highly selective and romantic picture of Native Americans," such framing has the tendency of "ignoring the active participation and possibly strategic agency of the indigenous people who chose to sit and pose and dress up for him."⁶⁵

Such understanding of identity's performativity—always contingent yet at times strategic—is reflective of the discursive nature of performativity as most famously put forth by Judith Butler in her foundational examination of gender norms. Butler locates "agency as a reiterative and rearticulatory practices, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power."⁶⁶ To rephrase the arguments by Zamir and Glass, the Native "cultural brokers" of *The North American Indian* secured their visibility and legibility by their performative embodiment of, perhaps as the only recourse, the norm/myth of the "vanishing race." As the project stands in empathy with the subject position of the Native American "cultural brokers" as opposed to Edward Curtis the proto-digital humanist, as I describe below in closing, the "performing" of the title signifies the project's understanding of its own archival agency in any "transformative"

⁶⁴ Ibid., 634, 637.

⁶⁵ Aaron Glass, "A Cannibal in the Archive: Performance, Materiality, and (In)Visibility in Unpublished Edward Curtis Photographs of the Kwakw Ak A'wakw Hamat'sa," *Visual Anthropology Review* 25, no. 2 (2009): 130.

⁶⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15. Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz have also discussed "performativity" in relation to archival practice, but their reading of Butler veers towards more conscious and liberatory version of agency towards an identifiable social change: Terry Cook and Schwartz, Joan M, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3–4 (2002): 171–85.

acts it may perform through its deployment of digital tools and platforms. As meta-commentary on the interdisciplinarity of the digital humanities, I pose from this experience that such empathy, or relating to a source and a method from a different subject position than the one ascribed by them, is precisely the opportunity to be had for the field in the state of the “emergent.”⁶⁷ In other words, this case study’s wrestling with differentiated access through CMS and visualizations points out that “open access” in and of itself is not the point of arrival but rather the point of departure, as PNAAM through its exploration with Mukurtu perhaps more effectively demonstrates that what I have laid out here.

Conclusion

As I began by recognizing the contemporary resonance of “data” and “information” in Curtis’s introduction to *The North American Indian*, I want to close by historicizing Edward Curtis as a proto-digital humanist, from which we may reflect on current digital scholarship’s relationship to technocratic discourse. First, he was very much a technologically driven scholar who taught himself how to use photography for its expressive and documentary capacities during this technology’s formative years in the U.S. He was a “multimodal” scholar, experimenting with different print forms and later also moving image and sound, in order to make more accessible—by making more aesthetically alluring—the knowledge production of the emerging method of ethnography. He was also an entrepreneur who raised funds for his project from powerful benefactors such J.P. Morgan and Theodore Roosevelt.

⁶⁷ Raymond Williams, “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–27.

As I have described above, this project is situated in similar circumstances, from technology to institutional funding. Ideologically, however, the “relativistic notion of culture,” unavailable at the time of *The North American Indian* as Brad Evans suggests, is now a possible framing within the discourse of identity in the multicultural U.S. From my vantage point, it not only creates the condition on which aforementioned counter-archival gestures are possible, but also, rather paradoxically, promotes the reliance on the universalist conception of the “database” and the unqualified plural possessive of “our cultural legacy” to flatten cultural, thus epistemological, difference. If the “protocols” in PNAAM are centrally about sensitivity to difference particularly in regards to access, the “infrastructural protocols,” such as API that allow the development of all-encompassing digital platforms like the *Digital Public Library of America* (dp.la), assume that the database is already relativistic in its flexibility.⁶⁸ Both are examples of interesting and productive developments in the current age of digital archive fever; and I do not see them as oppositional, just as the counter-archive as a mode of resistance and the method of “reading along the archival grain” are adjacent for this case study. As these explorations continue, however, the issue of diversity does matter significantly, if not directly for the representational/represented diversity of the field but for the subject positions of interpretative acts. As Drucker asks about the cultural shift that digital modes of knowledge signifies: “What does it mean to create ordering systems, models of knowledge and use, or environments for aggregation or consensus? Who will determine how knowledge is classified in digital representations? The next phase of cultural power

⁶⁸ For “protocols,” see Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2004); “Digital Public Library of America,” accessed December 15, 2014. <http://dp.la/>.

struggles will be embodied in digital instruments that model what we think we know and what we can imagine.”⁶⁹ In the next two chapters, I pursue in more detail the “who” of the digital archives in the *Library of Congress Flickr Project* and in *Digital Harlem*, in order to highlight the ways in which the national subject in the former and the social historian of the “everyday life” in the latter circumscribe the narrative and the interpretative possibilities of these projects.

⁶⁹ Johanna Drucker, *Speclab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6.

CHAPTER 4

Crowdsourcing Archives: Archives 2.0 and History/Memory

Introduction: “Not the same work, Not the Same Ethics”

In 2011, then President of France Nicolas Sarkozy announced his plans for *Maison de l’Histoire de France*, the country’s first official museum of national history.¹ Often criticized for his conservative anti-immigration policies and integrationist approach to ethnic diversity during his one-term tenure (2007-2012), Sarkozy proposed the *Maison* as his own cultural legacy project, similar to the modern tradition of presidential libraries in the U.S. The proposal immediately sparked vocal criticisms of Sarkozy and his cultural affairs advisors for putting forth a rather narrow and exclusionary version of French history and for using the occasion to pander to his growing “neo-nationalist” constituency.² The controversy also had a particular spatio-symbolic significance, as Sarkozy’s museum was to be erected at the site currently occupied by *Archive Nationales*, the National Archives of France. As stated in an open letter written by a group of prominent French historians and intellectuals, many on the left interpreted the displacement of the *Archive Nationales* by the *Maison de l’Histoire de France* as an attempt to erase the records that serve as evidence for the important contributions made by the “tiny lives... [of] ordinary men and women” that will not be properly represented

¹ Michael Kimmelman, “Sarkozy’s History Museum Plan in Paris Stirs Controversy,” *The New York Times*,

² Angelique Chrisafis, “French Historians Rally against Nicolas Sarkozy’s ‘Legacy’ Museum,” *The Guardian*, accessed December 29, 2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/10/nicolas-sarkozy-museum-protest>.

by the Museum's celebration of "the great Gallic men" of the nation's history.³ The most visible opposition was staged by the archivists, whose sustained strike and protest at the proposed site, along with Sarkozy's defeat in the presidential election in the following year, ultimately led to the demise of the plan.⁴

As many working in the field of libraries, museums, archives and other institutions of cultural heritage can attest, the seemingly benevolent aspiration of documenting and preserving public history for the good of the public has both implicit and explicit political consequences. The layers of power relations historically and presently embedded in the institutionalized practices of collective memory have been familiar in many related disciplines in various contexts. As seen in the *Maison* controversy, any attempt to establish a singular, definitive and exclusionary narrative of national history will be justifiably criticized as biased, revisionist and undemocratic in the current age of multiculturalism and diversity. The proposal for the displacement and the impending reduction of the *Archive Nationales* did not help Sarkozy's cause, especially given the importance of its founding history as one of the immediate achievements of the French Revolution and its enduring significance as the model for modern archives as public resource in democratic societies.⁵ As one archivist illuminatingly states about the protest in an interview,

³ "La Maison de l'histoire de France est un projet dangereux," *Le Monde*, accessed December 29, 2014. http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2010/10/21/la-maison-de-l-histoire-de-france-est-un-projet-dangereux_1429317_3232.html.

⁴ For a longer discussion of this controversy, see Nicolas Bancel and Herman Lebovics, "Building the History Museum to Stop History: Nicolas Sarkozy's New Presidential Museum of French History," *French Cultural Studies* 22, no. 4 (2011): 271–88.

⁵ Judith Panitch, "Liberty, Equality, Posterity?: Some Archival Lessons from the Case of the French Revolution," *American Archivist* 59, no. 1 (1996): 30–47.

I work on historical documents to make them readable for researchers, historians, and the public. If a museum is plonked here, I'll suddenly be expected to work on restoring documents to be put on show. *It's scary, it's not the same work, not the same ethics.*⁶

Because of the obvious connections and the overlapping institutional missions that exist between historical museums and public archives, they are mostly perceived as partners in the field of cultural heritage. The archivist's statement, however, is useful for it brings into relief the often-neglected differences between these two types of institutions and the kinds of cultural memory practices that are respectively represented by museums and archives, however minor they may seem. The historians, archivists and other opponents of the *Maison de l'Histoire de France* expressed the value of objective evidence found in the archive as opposed to that of curated narratives found in the museums, often more vulnerable to subjective motives, which this case was seen as particularly overt in its realpolitik, as they claim. Along with the investment in the archive's neutrality and evidential objectivity, the French Left also maintained a certain pure ideal of the archive based on its pluralism: "the tiny lives" that need to be safeguarded from the willful historical elisions by a conservative administration. Thus, the stance is that the archive's value in relationship to liberal democracy is obtained through *both* its supposed neutrality and its capacity for diversity, while the museum operates in the realm of politicized interpretations and visual spectacles.

Setting aside for the moment the flaws apparent in Sarkozy's effort to reinvigorate the increasingly obsolete notion of national identity through the the *Maison de l'Histoire*

⁶ Eric Laforest quoted in Chrisafis, "French Historians Rally against Nicolas Sarkozy's 'Legacy' Museum." Emphasis mine.

de France, the basis for the liberal opposition's response is not without its own, perhaps strategic, oblivion towards the archive's own function as an ideological apparatus. As many archival professionals and archival theorists have come to understand in recent decades through the archiving-as-activism movement, as I have discussed throughout, power relations are inscribed in the archives as much as they are in the exhibits of museums, regardless of the absence of any explicit political motivations. The interpretations of history may not be the archive's stated objective, but the archive inherits and advances certain ideologies and directly participates in the symbolic and material formation of the category of the evidential value and historical knowledge. One consequence of many conscientious efforts in the archival profession to reimagine the archives as more actively reflective of the pluralism that liberal democratic societies aspire to is the tension between the more *neutralist* sense of the archive's evidential value and the *interventionist* mode of reconstructing the archive to better represent those voices that would otherwise be undocumented in the traditional stewardship model. Many would agree that the archival profession, as a part of the broader discourse of identity in the U.S., has increasingly, however gradually, embraced the interventionist archival "work" and "ethics," often rightly celebrated as one of the important developments of the archival field.

As a part of my overarching commitment to expanding the terms by which we engage with minoritarian archives beyond the framework of diversity and inclusion, I ask the following questions as they relate to the recent discussions around the "archives 2.0" movement: How has the historically underrepresented and the proverbial "tiny lives" notion become the measure by which the archives demonstrate their ethical value in

society? What are the terms by which the application of digital technologies are conceived as doing this “work” and promoting this “ethics” of diversity in the archives? And finally, what are the epistemological consequences of the archives that actively intervene and champion the agency of the “user” in the representation of history? To address these questions in manner that accounts for both the new opportunities that digital technology ushers and the continuation of familiar concepts in this ushering, I turn to different vocabularies offered at the intersection of memory studies and new media studies to guide my discussion of the archival field’s implementation of Web 2.0 platforms, in which “tiny lives” seem to matter as much as the proverbial ‘great men of history.’

History/Memory

The controversy around Sarkozy’s Museum, beyond left vs. right and archives vs. museums, is also about, in epistemological terms, the difference between “history” and “memory” as categories of knowledge, which is also helpful in framing the recent developments in the archival field in its engagement with Web 2.0 platforms. Pierre Nora, the eminent French public historian, in his analysis of national culture and collectivity identity in the past few decades has put forward the often-cited binary formulation of “memory” as “social and unviolated,” emerging organically from “life itself,” and “history ... on the other hand, [as] the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, ...[of] an intellectual and secular production.”⁷ Responding in 1989 to what he then perceived as “acceleration of history,” he argues that the disappearance of

⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26, no. 1 (1989): 7–24.

“peasant culture” in modern industrialized societies and the “emergence of a history of history,” or of “historiographical consciousness” have resulted in the “conquest and eradication of memory by history.”⁸ In other words, what matters for Nora’s history/memory binary is the increasing, perhaps even totalizing, level of mediation in representations of memory, evident in what he referred to as “memorializing culture.”⁹ The category of memory no longer exists as pure knowledge, but in its inclusion into the category of history, it is now just as mediated as history by the forces of grand, official meta-narratives.

Such recognition of the collapse of the familiar binary of history and memory generates productive discussions for the archival field, but it also carries unfortunate consequences, for it activates a certain presentism and, simultaneously, nostalgia for related older concepts. What I find productive in Nora’s framing is that “memorializing culture” reveals how the categories of history and memory have always been mutually constitutive, not necessarily that how one category of this binary wins over the other, nor that this signals an “acceleration of history” in the present. Relatedly, as I have discussed in the previous chapter through the historicization of Edward Curtis as a proto- digital humanist or interventionist digital archivist, Nora’s investment in the “peasant culture” as the site that embodies “unviolated” memory retains certain social Darwinian and essentialist logic. Furthermore, I would argue that such presentism and nostalgia in Nora’s framing are the symptoms of 1) his universalist conceptualization of mediation as it applies to representation of history, and 2) accepting this mediation as the inevitable

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

consequence of industrialization. As I have discussed previously, similar universalisms and determinisms currently circulate in many conversations about digital technology.

While in the case of the Sarkozy's *Maison* displacing the Archive, the public debate was forced a choice between history and memory, the multimodality of the current digital archiving platforms allows us to disrupt this binary between history and memory. The field's ongoing consideration of the blurred line between neutrality and activism has taken on new directions with the emergence of Web 2.0, both its technological affordances and its discourse of participation. As I discuss below, the current considerations of the benefits of Web 2.0 for the archive have the tendency to romanticize the technology's ability to document the "tiny lives" of the users as well as its capacity to represent more factually accurate version of history. Its consideration of the "users," furthermore, is enframed by the discourse of community and collectivity, particularly as it applies to minoritarian histories, as I have discussed previously. Instead of focusing only on how the digital has expanded the capacity for the archive to bring those communities with shared histories together more efficiently, one can also ask how the very notion of community may require new conceptual vocabulary through the awareness of the mutually constitutive nature of history/memory so that the archivists can avoid essentializing the "tiny lives" even as they seek to champion them through digital affordances. Beyond the utilization of various Web 2.0 platforms and tools to foster the democratization of archives, one can also question what is democratic about the sharing of personal memories in the space of Web 2.0 in the first place. These concerns are not raised here in order to dismiss the possible benefits to be gained in recent developments

in digital archives, but rather as a response to the field's tendency to suspend its more nuanced understanding of the archive's mediating role in Web 2.0-related discussions.

Archive 1.0 to Archives 2.0

While the mass digital transition of library, museum and archival materials during the “archive 1.0” era, the most publicized example of which is the Google Books Library Project—was met with public anxieties and skepticisms about its legal, social and economic implications—current archival discussions around digital technology, by comparison, have been predominantly oriented towards “embracing web 2.0.”¹⁰ Although the issues that have emerged from the previous wave of mass digitization remain, Web 2.0 during the past decade has ushered in new areas of activities and research initiated by social media and other web-based platforms. These engagements have been broadly organized around the movement “archives 2.0,” defined by Kate Theimer as “an approach to archival practice that promotes openness and flexibility.”¹¹ As with other iterations of the “2.0,” archives 2.0 is based on the notion of “the web as platform,” signifying the shift towards web- as opposed to desktop-based applications in technical terms, and the distributed as opposed to centralized in the socio-cultural sense.¹² The

¹⁰ Mary Samouelian, “Embracing Web 2.0: Archives and the Newest Generation of Web Applications,” *The American Archivist* 72, no. 1 (2009): 42–71. Some have raised important questions regarding ownership and the need to consider more carefully the commercial control over archival holdings in the age of digitization. Nancy Loe’s discussion of the politics of licensing agreements with commercial entities is an example of considering the traditional archival values of custodianship and protecting the public ownership of cultural memory against the technodeterministic impulse to uncritically accept the terms of sharing as set forth by commercial enterprises: Nancy E. Loe, “Avoiding the Golden Fleece: Licensing Agreements for Archives,” *The American Archivist* 67, no. 1 (2004): 58–85.

¹¹ Kate Theimer, “What Is the Meaning of Archives 2.0,” *The American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 60.

¹² Tim O’Reilly, “What Is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software,” in *The Social Media Reader*, ed. Michael Mandiberg (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 33.

Web 2.0 framework has established both the technical infrastructure and the cultural protocol for user-generated content and the building of networks via exchange of content. The principles of “the web as platform” as advanced by Tim O’Reilly and John Batelle are explicitly commerce-oriented, developed in the years following the dot-com bubble as a new business framework that emphasizes providing web-based services, not products in the traditional sense. This ‘web-biz’ aspect of the Web 2.0 is reflected in the general marketing strategies discussed by archivists in their efforts towards establishing better social media presence. The core of the archives 2.0 model, however, lies in the imagining of a different relationship between the archives and its users—one that employs Web 2.0’s technological affordances and its ethos of networked collectivity/community/crowd to overcome certain restrictions associated with traditional archival practice.

In various accounts of archives 2.0’s potential for changing the archival paradigm, many have emphasized the participatory aspect of Web 2.0. Situating the archives 2.0 within the user-studies line of research in archival studies, Isto Huvila more specifically refers to archives 2.0 as the “participatory archive,” describing its benefits as “decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records.”¹³ Citing the importance of preserving “collective memory,” “memory-truth” and the “community of memory” for various human rights causes around the world, Eric Ketelaar similarly proposes that

¹³ Isto Huvila, “Participatory Archive: Towards Decentralised Curation, Radical User Orientation, and Broader Contextualisation of Records Management,” *Archival Science* 8, no. 1 (2008): 15.

we use Web 2.0 features to turn our archives into Archives 2.0, stimulating people to upload their stories, their documents, to the archival institution's server, not only forming relationships between private and public documents but also establishing communities of records.¹⁴

Echoing the “openness” of Web 2.0, Ketelaar uses the metaphor of “space” to argue for the “archives serving as spaces of memory, where people’s experiences can be *transformed into meaning*.”¹⁵ These discussions of archives 2.0 suggest that the archive in the activist sense is a site that assigns “meaning” to heretofore undocumented memories, making them accessible, legible and legitimate. They claim that the participatory platform of archives 2.0 mediates this process more democratically by virtue of its openness. It seems, at times, that archives 2.0 would allow the archival field to “memorialize” history altogether by elevating the status of dispersed memory into the realm of documented history. The openness of the new archive is presumed to have the effect of leveling the field, decentralizing the process of who gets to contribute to the construction of collective memory/history. This in turn introduces new opportunities for advancing the archival field’s aspirations for broader inclusion and greater access. If the archive’s particular cultural authority was previously understood to derive in part from its role in adjudicating the archival value of various materials, archives 2.0 thrives on the lack of such institutional control, empowering instead the abstract category of the “user.” More emphasis is placed on the Web 2.0 platforms’ advantages in gathering and sharing

¹⁴ Eric Ketelaar, “Archives as Spaces of Memory,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 29, no. 1 (2008): 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. Emphasis mine.

these stories than on the specifics as to how these contributions are evaluated and then preserved in manner that meets archival requirements.

Such investment in the user's agency (more on this particular point below) and in the "community of records" through archives 2.0's openness and participation reflect some persuasive claims in popular and academic discourse regarding the virtues of Web 2.0.¹⁶ One of the most widely circulated analyses in this regard has been Henry Jenkins' notion of the "convergence culture," which describes "the relationship between three concepts—media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence."¹⁷ This cultural shift applies to many different contexts, from commerce to activism, as well as to public institutions. Through digital collections, exhibits and user contributions, no longer do libraries only share, museums only show and archives only save. Contrary to the *Archives Nationales* versus the Maison scenario discussed above, the *Library of Congress Flickr Commons Project (LoC Flickr)*, one of the most prominent examples in the archives 2.0 discussion, demonstrates Web 2.0's allowing for a greater level of convergence of these activities.¹⁸ Despite the general difficulty of quantifying meaningful and long-term benefits of such exploratory endeavors, the project's final report for its pilot phase lists many successful outcomes, primarily focusing on the possibilities of user-generated "tags" for expanding the scope of archival description, as well as the user comments, which the Library of Congress (LoC) assess as "sparking memory and

¹⁶ TIME magazine's selection of "YOU" as the person of the year in 2006 is emblematic of the empowerment narrative. Lev Grossman, "You-Yes, You-Are TIME's Person of the Year," *TIME*, December 25, 2006. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570810,00.html>.

¹⁷ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 2–4.

¹⁸ "Historic Photos (Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project)," *Flickr*, accessed December 29, 2014. https://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/collections/72157601355524315.

conversations about history.” Other examples of archives 2.0 similarly focus on various advantages of user-generated tags and the sharing of the users’ personal memories and knowledge of historical contexts through their interactions with archival materials.¹⁹

However, the claims relating to archives 2.0’s general marketing advantages for reaching out to a wider audience seem more convincing than those about the archive 2.0’s capacities for forming communities, whose stories are “transformed into meaning” by sharing them online as Ketelaar argues. While the Web 2.0-platform model for archival institutions has many potential benefits, some of its claims, in their affirmation of the ubiquitous enthusiasm for many things associated with social media, overlook certain contingencies of social media’s “openness” and of the relations formed within it. For one thing, as many critiques of techno-utopianism and techno-determinism have pointed out, new technologies often continue existing social divisions and barriers as well as create new ones. Going beyond the proverbial “digital divide,” with the fundamental understanding that Web 2.0 platforms, as with all cultural-technical formations, are never neutral, many new media theorists have argued that what is often expressed as aspiration for participatory democracy may not be best secured through further promotion and use of technology.²⁰ For example, in her analysis of demographic data of social media users, Eszter Hargittai finds significant correlation between the enrollment and the activity of

¹⁹ Michelle Springer et al., *For the Common Good: The Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project*, 2008. http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_report_final.pdf.

²⁰ For more critical analysis of Web 2.0, See the special issue of *First Monday* 13, no. 3 (2008). <http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/issue/view/263/showToc>; see also the special issue of *Cultural Studies* 25, nos. 4 and 5 (2011), which directly questions the usefulness of Jenkins’ concept of “convergence culture.”

users on social media and the categories of gender, race and ethnicity.²¹ Such findings are reiterated by danah boyd in her analysis of “white flight” from MySpace to Facebook amongst teens in 2006-2007.²² In the example of the *LoC Flickr* project, then, while it is not intentionally discriminatory of any particular user groups, it does privilege certain sectors of the public simply by virtue of its online existence.

But more importantly for my discussion of history/memory, beyond the constitutive demographic of social media in general that qualifies the claim of openness, is that, for better or for worse, the notions of “decentralized curation” and “participatory” do not account for the ways in which the *LoC Flickr* project reflects the highly mediated nature of these platforms. As perhaps the most ‘normative’ institution of its kind, LoC circumscribes its Flickr presence with the normative nationalist framework of celebrating history’s progress and the national identities that comprise its Flickr collection. I am not suggesting that its ‘normative’ function is necessarily its limitation; rather, I want to emphasize how mediation through digital platforms of the history/memory binary is far from merely “open.” While not dismissing the potential benefits of various forms of user participation, however, one can still rethink some of the more triumphant versions of agency in one’s assessment of what archives 2.0 signifies for memory practices and how they are mediated in Web 2.0 platforms. Both by the framework of the progressionist version of national history and by the incorporation of the layer of user-generated content in the advancement of that rhetoric of progress, the nature of the participatory agency

²¹ Eszter Hargittai, “Open Doors, Closed Spaces? Differentiated Adoption of Social Network Sites by User Background,” in *Race after the Internet*, ed. Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White (New York: Routledge, 2012), 223–45.

²² danah boyd, “White Flight in Networked Publics: How Race and Class Shaped American Teen Engagement with MySpace and Facebook,” in *Race after the Internet*, ed. Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White (New York: Routledge, 2012), 203–22.

remains discursive, rather clearly, I would argue, in the *LoC Flickr* example, rather than transformative.

Community/Connectivity

While the openness of archives 2.0 may indeed be effective in drawing more people to the archive, this very condition of openness in some ways makes it difficult to simultaneously suggest that archives 2.0 fosters “communities of memory,” if by community one means a collectivity marked by its own set specificities. The findings of these more in depth analyses of social media platforms suggest that a more qualified sense of the community might be more productive in our estimation about the status of agency in archives 2.0. This moment of the “crowd” provides the opportunity to ask how the changes in memory practices in social media settings may require a new theoretical framework to describe the type of relations formed by and within largely undifferentiated users on these open platforms.

The past decade of research in the area of community archiving has contributed a much more nuanced understanding of the complexity of identity formations and of collective identities. For example, in asking the question “Archives 2.0: if we build it, will they come?” Joy Palmer notes the inadequacy of the term “crowd” for the type of “deeper involvement” that archivists often imagine for the archives 2.0 users.²³ For Palmer, because social media assumes a certain set of shared practices associated with its use, Etienne Wenger’s notion of the “community of practice” supplies much needed specificity required for developing any meaningful sense of the community in archives

²³ Joy Palmer, “Archives 2.0: If We Build It, Will They Come?” *Ariadne* 60 (2009). <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue60/palmer>.

2.0.²⁴ For Andrew Flinn, the insight into the complex dynamics of what we call community has less to do with technology, but more the contingencies of identity formation, as he argues “the extent to which that community has legitimacy, has developed organically and its members feel ownership and belonging or, conversely, whether it has been constructed by an external agency, may be ultimately more significant than the technologies that seek to enable that community to come together.”²⁵

Both authors respectively argue for more specificity in how the term “community” is activated in the context of archives 2.0, and for the continuation of the field’s already established commitment to analyzing community and collective identity as phenomena that are not easily explained or determined by a single factor such as digital technology. In this regard, various community archive projects in the United Kingdom as discussed by Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, and also the Polar Bear Expedition Project that explores the development of “second generation” finding aids at the University of Michigan, have generated meaningful results, precisely because these projects rely on communities that have existed independent of and prior to social media.²⁶ Their discussions of these projects are also wary of any deterministic claims about the role of latest technologies. If the success of the archives 2.0 projects is measured by the extent to which the community may take ownership of the enframing of their narratives in the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Andrew Flinn, “Independent Community Archives and Community-Generated Content: ‘Writing, Saving and Sharing Our Histories,’” *Convergence* 16, no. 1 (2010): 49.

²⁶ Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, “‘It Is Noh Mistri, Wi Mekin Histri,’ Telling Our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the U.K., Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream,” in *Community Archives and the Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet, 2009), 3–27; Magia Ghetu Krause and Elizabeth Yakel, “Interaction in Virtual Archives: The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections Next Generation Finding Aid,” *The American Archivist* 70, no. 2 (2007): 282–314.

archives, as opposed to the metric of the number and frequency of user comments, it is the closed-ness, not the openness that fosters meaningful archival building.

These questions regarding the status of the community create openings for engaging with theories of social relations in digital culture more broadly. If archives 2.0's openness is without much specificity, can the discussion continue to insist on the "crowd" as forming a coherent and legible collectivity? In this regard, the related field of memory studies has more directly proposed alternative frameworks. For example, José van Dijck argues, "when it comes to digital platforms such as Flickr, we may question the appropriateness of the term 'collective' in relation to perspectives, experiences and memory."²⁷ In challenging the pertinence of "collective memory" for the analysis of social media, van Dijck suggests the term "connective memory" in order to "account for the construction of a new kind of memory that mixes not only the individual and the collective, the private and the public, but also past and future past into a permanent stream of visual 'present.'" Andrew Hoskins similarly proposes that,

a key trend in this regard is the way in which the archives have become networked—part of a new accessible and highly connected network memory. Thus, the archive can even be seen as a medium in its own right as it has been liberated 'from archival space into archival time.'²⁸

Both "connective memory" and "networked memory" are useful in differentiating the types of relations formed in archives 2.0 from those that the archival field understands as

²⁷ José van Dijck, "Flickr and the Culture of Connectivity: Sharing Views, Experiences, Memories," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011): 402.

²⁸ Andrew Hoskins, "Digital Network Memory," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 97.

“collective” or “community memory.” The terms “connective” and “networked” bring attention to the *formal* qualities of memory practices in Web 2.0, while the terms “collective” and “community” are more about the actual *content* of shared memories. It is possible that a community formed by a set of shared experiences might remain connected, or networked through archives 2.0, but it is worth asking how such connections are qualitatively different from, say, those connections formed by oral history projects or other archival methods associated with collective memory research.²⁹

This argument for differentiation does not suggest that “connective memory” is somehow inherently more superficial, or less meaningful, than “collective memory” in terms of archival value, but rather that erasure of their crucial differences in archives 2.0 discussions often leads to conclusions that overinvest in Web 2.0 as a solution to the challenges in identifying and working with various historically marginalized communities. The difference between connective and the collective is just one of many ways in which digital archives projects provide the opportunities to examine how technological affordances, as process and as another layer of mediation, require not only commitment to innovation but also to different set of theoretical frameworks.

Archival Promises/Archival Nightmares

The impulse to affirm the archival field’s democratic aspirations through the familiar techno-utopic claims associated of Web 2.0 seems difficult to resist in this contemporary moment of digital archive fever. While digital utopianism certainly

²⁹ For a comprehensive account of the development “collective memory” research in archival studies, see Trond Jacobsen, Ricardo L. Punzalan, and Margaret L. Hedstrom, “Invoking ‘Collective Memory’: Mapping the Emergence of a Concept in Archival Science,” *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 217–51.

circulates within and across every sector of society, it has had a greater resonance for the archival field, for the digital discourse particularly operates with archival rhetoric, as many new media theorists and media archeologists have put forward.³⁰ In her analysis of the archival logic of digital culture, Wendy Chun argues,

key to the newness of the digital is a conflation of memory and storage that both underlies and undermines digital media's archival promises. Memory, with its constant degeneration does not equal storage; although artificial memory has historically combined the transitory with the permanent, the passing with the stable, digital media complicates this relationship by making the permanent into an enduring ephemeral, creating unforeseen degenerative links between humans and machines.³¹

By describing the condition of digital memory as “enduring ephemeral,” Chun unpacks both its materiality and its temporality. Considering the extent to which digital media is promoted and practiced as already-archival, the instability of the medium and all of the “archival nightmares” resulting from it are rather easily forgotten.³² Since the archive 1.0 era of digitization and digital preservation, the archival field has long been keen on digital's impermanence and vulnerability. For example, while the general public may conceptualize personal blogs as a space where one's life and thoughts are archived,

³⁰ See for example, Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, ed. Jussi Parikka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

³¹ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory,” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 148.

³² *Ibid.*, 149.

archivists are concerned with how to properly archive such digital content.³³ The sustained engagement with digital preservation and digital records management in the archival field attests to its firm understanding of the digital materiality's ephemerality. Its particular vantage point grounded in professional practice allows it to avoid the widely-circulated "conflation of memory and storage" in regards to materiality despite the field's own set of subscription to digital utopianism as discussed above.³⁴

In regards to the temporal dimension of the "enduring ephemeral," however, the field's belief in the digital's "archival promises" often trumps "archival nightmares." Citing various examples such as the Internet Wayback Machine to the more mundane "archive" features of blogs, Chun argues that the digital media disrupts the traditional representation of temporality by "layering of chronologies"—new is already stored as old and old repeated as new—creating the paradoxical condition of the "enduring ephemeral."³⁵ Chun critiques new media theorists' emphasis on "speed" and "efficiency" as the defining feature of digital media and suggests that "rather than getting caught up in speed, then, we must analyze, as we try to grasp a present that is always degenerating, the ways in which ephemerality is made to endure."³⁶ For archivists, who have naturally invested in the general notion of "seriality" of historical records—as much as media theorists have with broadcast media, such as television—conceptualizing a new archival

³³ Example of research in the area of "personal archiving" is Christopher A. Lee, *I, Digital: Personal Collections in the Digital Era* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011).

³⁴ Related to this discussion is the "trope of immateriality" as described in Jean-François Blanchette, "A Material History of Bits," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 62, no. 6 (2011): 1042–57.

³⁵ Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory," 170.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

order of things that do not adhere to heretofore dependable concept of seriality poses challenges. However, it is a challenge that may require more than simply understanding the “layering of chronologies” as more and better historical knowledge, as Chun argues, such cumulative sense of history is the continuation of “the enlightenment ideal that better information leads to better knowledge, which in turn guarantees better decision.”³⁷ As discussed in the historical context of Edward Curtis in the previous chapter, this enlightenment ideal has had many precedents, each generation attaching new optimism for better knowledge to the emerging technology of its time. We see the expansion of such “archival promises” in the discourse of the archives 2.0 movement, particularly in those claims that presume digital activities on these platforms to have inherent archival value and that they cumulatively amount to a “better understanding of history,” as stated in the LoC final report on the Flickr Project.³⁸

Such investment in the “archival promises” in the profession is perhaps most evident in current calls for crowdsourcing archival work. For example, Max Evans suggests that the benefits of “crowdsourcing” volunteers for archival description is not only cost-effective but also achieves the lofty ideal of “archives of the people, by the people, for the people.”³⁹ Huvila also states that “the proposed participatory approach to archival management envisions a digital archive essentially as a self-steering system like

³⁷ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions Software and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 98.

³⁸ Michelle Springer et al., *For the Common Good: The Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project*, 2008. http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_report_final.pdf.

³⁹ Max J. Evans, “Archives of the People, by the People, for the People,” *The American Archivist* 70, no. 2 (2007): 387–400. The term “crowdsourcing” was originally coined by Jeff Howe, as a derivation of outsourcing, citing the practice of exporting jobs internationally for cheaper labor wages. See Jeff Howe, “The Rise of Crowdsourcing,” *Wired*, June 2006. <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html>.

a crowd and places special emphasis on the collaborativeness and conversationality of archive building.”⁴⁰ Such adoption of the familiar rhetoric of Web 2.0 for the archives not only glosses over the implications for labor practices in the profession as well as the questions regarding the reliability of the crowd, but it also sees Web 2.0 technology as the solution to the perpetual problem of backlog of unprocessed archival materials.⁴¹ However, as LoC’s final report helpfully points out, even for an institution with more resources than most, the labor and the cost of launching and managing the pilot phase alone of the Flickr Commons project was significant, and this process was far from “self-steering,” as some have claimed.

Conclusion: Evidence of Connectivity

Once removed from some of the more techno-utopic commitment to Web 2.0, the ongoing archival discussion can create a space to consider how the archives 2.0 movement is positioned within the broader politics of representing the past in digital culture. This discussion can move beyond simply accepting the popular belief in the Web 2.0’s capacity for advancing participatory democracy, forming intimate communities and even increasing historical knowledge. The archival field is not unique in its current emphasis on the implementation and the application of Web 2.0. As another ‘applied’ field, digital humanities has been criticized at times for advancing technocratic thinking. However, various scholars in digital humanities have been also vocally pushing

⁴⁰ Huvila, “Participatory Archive,” 24–25.

⁴¹ One of the most significant recent developments in the profession in regards to archival labor is the “More Product, Less Process” model, which argues for less archival description in favor of more efficient processing. It has served as basis for many Web 2.0 initiatives: Mark A. Greene and Dennis E. Meissner, “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,” *The American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (2005): 208–63.

for a different kind of engagement of digital technology, going beyond implementation and engaging with critique of information culture both in- and outside of the academy. As Alan Liu states in his call for digital humanities' attention to "cultural critique," much of "innovation" and "building" in digital humanities has focused on implementations of tools and platforms, at times in manner complicit with "today's great postindustrial, neoliberal, corporate and global flows of information-cum-capital."⁴² Liu refers to this singular focus on implementation as "instrumentalism," which often has had the effect of self-imposed limitation, as it distracts us from the opportunities to develop also the analysis of the cultural logic that drives technological innovations in the first place.⁴³

The issue with such celebratory investment in Web 2.0 is not that these technologies do not have much to offer for the development of different archival practices in response to the changing conditions for how archival materials are accessed in digital environments.⁴⁴ These changes, however, are not only technological, but perhaps more importantly are also epistemological, the various consequences of which archival studies' longstanding analysis of the concept of evidence and its understanding of archiving-as-process has much to say in the matter, particularly at this moment in which the archive has become a key concept in many related disciplines. Returning to the issue of the history/memory binary in archival discussions, the conversations about archives 2.0 can also address the increasing level of conscious co-existence of history and

⁴² Alan Liu, "Where Is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 491.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 500.

⁴⁴ One convincing account of online communities' interaction through archives is offered by Alexis Lothian, "Archival Anarchies: Online Fandom, Subcultural Conservation, and the Transformative Work of Digital Ephemera," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 6 (2013): 541–56.

memory in, for example, the *LoC Flickr Commons*' mixing of "official" documents of history with personal testimonies and reflections. As Anne Gilliland-Swetland states in her assessment of the significance of the archival field in the digital era of information management,

[t]he archival perspective brings an evidence-based approach to the management of recorded knowledge. It is fundamentally concerned with the organizational and personal processes and context through which records and knowledge are created as well as the ways in which records individually and collectively reflect those processes.⁴⁵

By activating the field's "evidence-based approach" to our understanding of recent digital affordances, one can ask: what are the traces of user participation evidence? Do these engagements with archival materials in the *LoC Flickr Commons* constitute "personal memory," as described in Sue McKemmish's notion of the "evidence of me," or do they belong in the realm of public history?⁴⁶

If the recent phasing out of the *Your Archive* project by U.K. National Archives after the initial fanfare is any indication, the evidential value of user engagements remains uncertain; and thus, this project's second life in a different platform will emphasize "the distinction between official catalogue descriptions and user-generated content."⁴⁷ As to the representation of the historical trajectory of diversity in the U.S.,

⁴⁵ Anne Gilliland-Swetland, *Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: The Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000): v.

⁴⁶ Sue McKemmish, "Evidence of Me..." *Archives and Manuscripts* 24, no. 1 (1996): 28–45.

⁴⁷ The *Your Archive* project at the U.K. National Archives, is no longer active as of September 2012: http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Home_page. It instead is now promoting

the archivists/curators of *LoC Flickr Project* have chosen include images of various minority groups in various historical contexts. While there is no single collection that is specifically dedicated to a racial and ethnic group, their presence is dispersed throughout various collections, such as “1930-40’s in Color,” “Civil War Faces,” “Women Striving Forward,” and others.⁴⁸ Despite the overall “patriotic” tone and framing of these collections—the American flag and the torch of the Statue of Liberty adorning the banner that appears in every navigable page—they also contain photographs that are not entirely celebratory: images of African American sharecroppers or Japanese Americans in World War II internment camps. For many commenters, the inclusion of these images lends a sense of recognition, of some comfort in seeing that they will be “remembered.” For others, the inclusion of the images that give evidence to the history of exclusion is a sign of progress, as one commenter notes on one of the photographs of interned Japanese women, “all is well that ends well.”⁴⁹ I am pointing out this one particular comment as an example of similar commentaries not because I am invested in morally assessing how the crowd is often uniformed or misinformed about the complicated history of race in the U.S. Rather, I am more interested in, from the evidential perspective, the ways in which such comments offer glimpses into how the general optimism around technology meets that of multiculturalism and diversity. While Web 2.0 platforms may seem to be the means through which Sue McKemmish’s notion of “evidence of me” is fully realized,

“Discovery service,” which specifies user input as “annotations and tags”:
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/new-catalogue.htm>.

⁴⁸ “Historic Photos (Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project).”

⁴⁹ The Library of Congress, *Japanese-American Camp, War Emergency Evacuation, [Tule Lake Relocation Center, Newell, Calif.] (LOC)*, photo, January 1, 1939,
https://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/2179117431/.

what the archives 2.0 model may be generating through the approach of the commons and crowdsourcing is less “evidence of me” but more evidence of the Web 2.0 platform itself and the digital archive fever that has accompanied it.

Again, while ongoing experiments with implementing various aspects of Web 2.0 are certainly productive and even necessary, overinvesting in their archival value at this moment in terms of its enhancement of liberal democracy, collectivity and historical knowledge may be limiting the field’s theoretical consideration of the archive’s particular cultural authority in its mediation of the categories of official histories and personal memories. The archival field has not only been attentive to the issues regarding digital materiality’s volatility and the challenges of digital preservation that those in media archeology and digital humanities have begun to address, but it is also particularly well-positioned to explain the nuances of the archive’s mediating role in representations of history/memory in digital environments. This conversation can benefit from the current interdisciplinary significance of the archive in the analysis of the cultural consequences of the database and the aggregation of information. Media historian Lisa Gitelman, for example, argues that the aggregation of distributed information on the web in a search engine H-Bot (History Bot) results in “a related sensitivity to ‘history’ as itself historically produced” and “a richly historicized version of history.”⁵⁰ Her skepticism of the algorithmic nature of this mediation is also echoed in her assessment of the broader discussion on digital “mediation and remediation,” as most influentially theorized by Jay

⁵⁰ Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 150.

Bolter and Richard Grusin.⁵¹ While acknowledging the utility of their work in unpacking digital visual culture, Gitelman points out that “[they] have trimmed out any mention of human agents, as if media were naturally the way they are, without authors, designers, engineers entrepreneurs, programmers, investors, owners, or audiences.”⁵² As I have also questioned throughout, she identifies this omission as reflective of the general difficulty of conceptualizing agency: “because agency is so hard to specify[,] technological innovation appears autonomous.”⁵³

Returning, then, to the opportunities afforded by the condition in which the traditional boundaries around history and memory as categories of knowledge no longer effectively hold, as well as to the similar issue I raised regarding Nora’s unsatisfyingly universal and determinate conceptualization of mediation, I do want to locate optimism in the sense of “connective memory” or “networked memory” for the ethnic digital archives and the metaphoric and the actual “tiny lives” represented in them. This optimism is just as risky as investing in any overdetermined sense of mediation, for “connective” and “network” are terms just as vulnerable to techno-determinism when they fail to acknowledge the role of “human agents” and the subject positions they imply. First, I believe that connective and networked memory opens up the discussions around agency in relation to how we theorize “community” in archival studies when the notion of community has been thoroughly commodified and exists to often serve the interest of *the archive*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ David J. Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

⁵² Gitelman, *Always Already New Media, History and the Data of Culture*, 9.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ One of the most extensive of accounts of the notion of “community” is offered by Miranda Joseph, who describes, through cultural Marxism, psychoanalysis and queer theory, the dynamic between the project of

Second, the conceptual orientation of connective and networked memory places this issue of agency in closer proximity to the technological infrastructure that currently matters in any discussion of representation. This optimism for the time being is a speculation that does not yet identify the end result, but it is based on my assessment that the current rhetoric around digital technology and all of its possibilities does not match the repeated rhetoric around diversity and inclusion that seems to foreclose, rather than transform, the opportunities for the ethnic archives at the moment. For the motivation of social justice that animates various models for the interventionist archive, I see connective memory as strategically less intimate than collective or community memory; it communicates some sense of responsibility or relation to each other without relying on likeness as the basis for collectivity. For the related project of knowledge modeling, new theoretical orientation such as connective memory is useful for what it is capable of deferring; identity categories often fail to account for a coherent and legible historical narrative even as we insist that they do through evidence, data and records. This is not in denial of the moments of empowerment and the critical insights to be gained through identifying communities and collectivities where they exist; rather, in those sites of representation of race and ethnicity that speak loudly through the archival authority of evidence, the necessary critical intervention might be to deflate the collective categories of race and ethnicity as the explanatory logic, which I demonstrate in the next chapter through unpacking the layers of ethnographic realism in *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930*.

legibility and social justice in “community” and the logic of late-capitalism: see, Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

CHAPTER 5

Evidential Matters of *Digital Harlem* and #*BlackLivesMatter*

Recently I was given an opportunity to speak to a class in religious studies about the relationship between academic research and digital technology.¹ With other information resources staff at Occidental College, my role for this course on the apocryphal texts of early Christianity was to provide technical support to faculty and undergraduates on how to use Zotero, a popular bibliographic tool freely available to the public.² For an upper-division course designed, in part, to prepare the students for the requisite comprehensive exam for graduation, the tool developed by digital historians specifically for scholarly research proved its practical value for gathering, organizing, annotating and sharing various source materials. Despite my unfamiliarity with the course content, what I found very useful about the course for my own interests were not only the ways these functionalities were incorporated into the weekly course assignments by the faculty instructor to further the students' ability to generate sound research, but also how Apocrypha as a category of knowledge activated methodological discussions about historiography and evidence in relation to subjectivity and knowledge production, as framed by the instructor from the very beginning the semester.

Bringing these two adjacent objectives together for my presentation to introduce the students to the emerging fields of digital humanities and digital history, I took the opportunity to discuss *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930*, which I propose here in

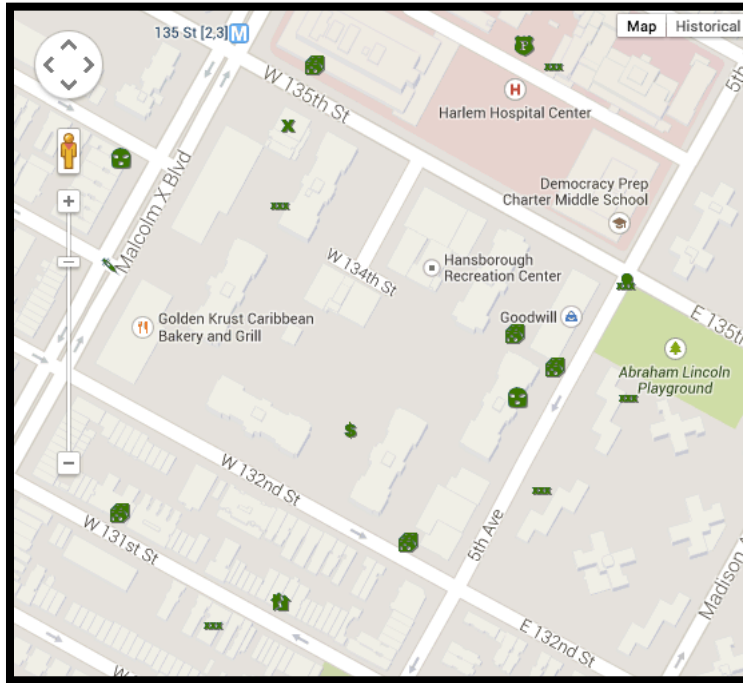
¹ I thank Kristi Upson-Saia for the opportunity.

² Zotero is developed by Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University: www.zotero.org.

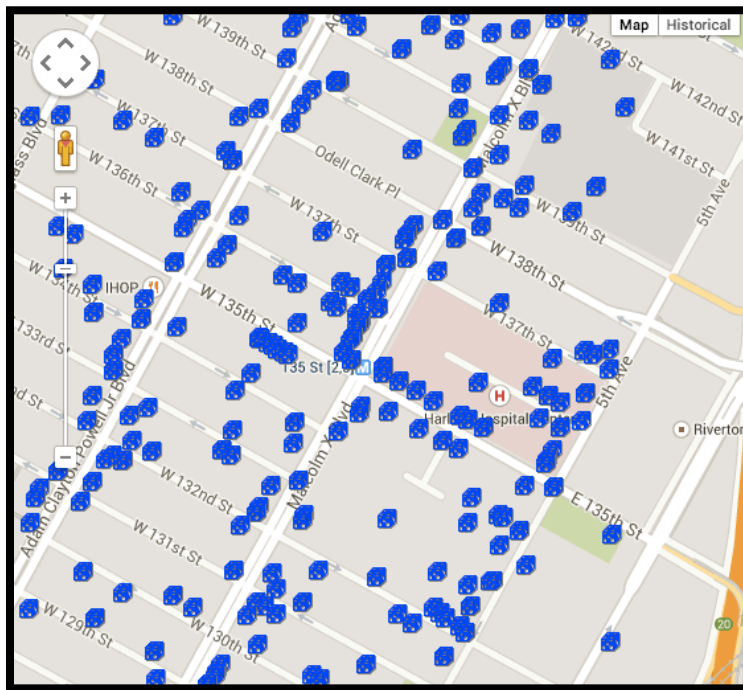
closing as a particularly revealing instance of what I have been calling the “ethnographic realism.”³ The winner of the American Historical Association’s 2010 Roy Rosenzweig Award for Digital Innovation among other accolades for digital scholarship, *Digital Harlem* has been collaboratively developed by four historians at the University of Sydney in Australia. As an “ethnographic study of everyday life in Harlem as it became the black capital of the world,” it is an impressive result of their extensive research in various archives in New York City, comprised of historic black newspapers, prison records, and the case files of the Manhattan District Attorney.⁴ It utilizes Google Maps to display various GIS-coordinate data points from their extensive database to provide a platform through which one may locate broad patterns as well as trace the spatial footprints of individual lives. In this regard, *Digital Harlem* effectively performs the previously discussed collapse of the traditional binaries of history (official records) and memory (“tiny lives”) through its “multimodality,” which is characteristic of many digital archives today.

³ Shane White et al., “Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930,” 2010. www.digitalharlem.org. For digital history, see Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>; Steven Mintz and Sara McNeil, “Digital History,” accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/>.

⁴ Michelle Tiedje, “Project Reviews, Digital Harlem Everyday Life 1915-1930,” *Digital History Project, University of Nebraska, Lincoln*, 2009. <http://digitalhistory.unl.edu/p-reviews/harlemtiedje.php>.



[Figure 19: Snapshot of an area in “January 1925” map in *Digital Harlem*]

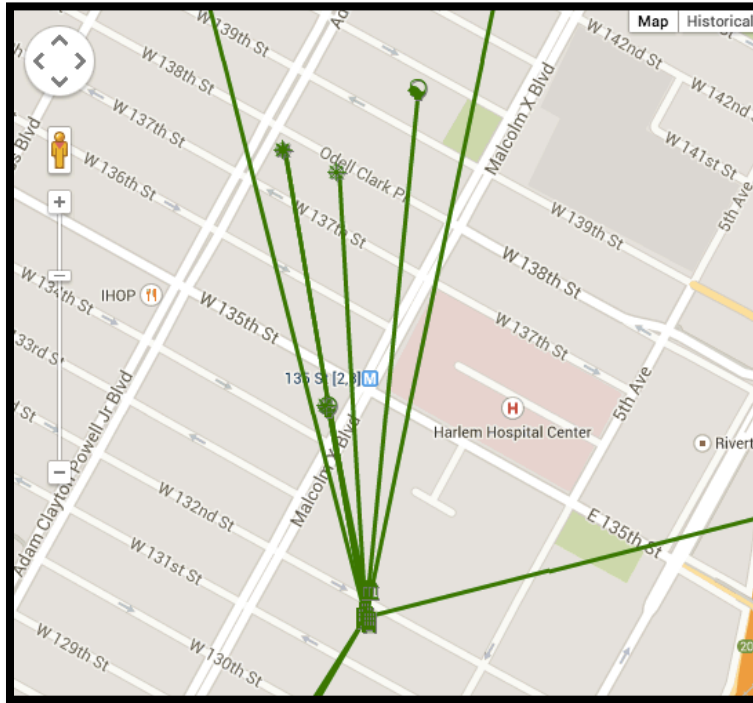


[Figure 20: Snapshot of “Numbers” map in *Digital Harlem*]

Alongside of its very functional and granular search options that allow display of data according to date, location, events and persons (more on this later), *Digital Harlem* also offers a few curated maps as another set of main access points in its interface, highlighting the site's dual purpose as both macro- and micro-perspective of the time and place of the Harlem Renaissance. The first map is entirely focused on "January 1925," in which one can see on the map various events that took place during this time frame. As evident in this snapshot of the map near what is currently the renowned Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, it was either exceptionally or representatively crime-ridden month: two robberies; five prostitution arrests; six "numbers" and gambling-related arrests; as well as one event that discussed the "changes in Negro literature," and one performance at the Lincoln Theater [Figure 19]. The second map preselected by the authors shows all the data points related to "Numbers Arrest" which is of particular interest to the authors as they recently published a book on the topic in conjunction with this digital project [Figure 20].⁵ The data points of this map are too many to count individually, but each event (or node) can be connected to other events that are related through their records, established by the names of the arrested or the apprehending police officer. Another map focuses on the life of a "seventeen-year-old African American boy placed on probation in 1928 after having been convicted of having sexual intercourse with his underage girlfriend" [Figure 21]. He is given the pseudonym "Fuller Long," who is represented both photographically here by an unrelated image of a

⁵ Shane. White et al., *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem between the Wars* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

local fraternity basketball team and through the data points that show where he lived, worked and spent his leisure time.



[Figure 21: Snapshot of “Fuller Long” map in *Digital Harlem*]

Again, this is quite an impressive digital archive in terms of its scale and its usability, which are often in inverse relationship to each other: displaying a large dataset usefully with complexity is a challenging task, as the previous discussions of my own case studies demonstrate. Although the utilization of Google Maps, in my estimation, fails to deliver any meaningful spatial analysis of these events, and also temporally misrepresents insofar as the Google Maps as the base layer contains contemporary landmarks (“Malcolm X Boulevard,” “IHOP,” etc.), it is a strategic and low-threshold use of GIS to display and manage a large and complex dataset. While many accolades of

Digital Harlem pay attention to the map component of the project, the numerous publications by the authors that have been created in conjunction with *Digital Harlem* demonstrate the generative nature within the very process, similar to what Chris Johanson has stated about 3D modeling: “it is the process that has the most to offer.”⁶

But there is more to unpack here than the practical functionalities of these features of *Digital Harlem*. As I have argued through the digital humanities’ concept of “models,” digital archives such as *Digital Harlem* are not neutral and objective resources but arguments that reflect and enact epistemological frameworks and value systems: they are cultural formations. Such insight is also echoed by Anne Balsamo in her “method of hermeneutic reverse engineering,” useful for unpacking the “technological assemblage” that is “constituted through the connections or articulations among elements.”⁷ She applies “hermeneutic reverse engineering” in case studies that often deal with cultural identities as a method of:

- 1) identifying the meanings and assumptions that already structure the scene of technological innovation
- 2) isolating key signifying elements that influence the technology-under-development, and
- 3) providing a sense of the possibilities for rearticulating (or reassembling) different meanings [...].⁸

⁶ Christopher Johanson, “Visualizing History: Modeling in the Eternal City,” *Visual Resources* 25, no. 4 (2009).

⁷ Anne Balsamo, *Designing Culture: The Technological Imagination at Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 15.

⁸ Ibid., 16. Miriam Posner also discusses the evaluative and the pedagogic import of such “reverse engineering” method for digital projects: “Miriam Posner, ‘How Did They Make That? Reverse Engineering Digital Projects,’” *CUNY Digital Humanities Initiative*, March 27, 2014. <http://cunydh.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2014/03/24/miriam-posner-how-did-they-make-that-reverse-engineering-digital-projects-32714/>.

In other words, what are the rhetorical dimensions of *Digital Harlem*'s "digital innovation," not separate from, but as they are embedded and distributed throughout its technical allowances? While mindful that such "reverse engineering" also needs to evaluate the project in its own disciplinary and methodological terms, I propose that the "ethnographic realism" of *Digital Harlem* speaks to the broader issues of historical evidence and the archival condition that inform any epistemological claims that can be made about minoritarian subjects.

The rhetorical effect of "ethnographic realism" of *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930* begins with the project's claim of "everyday," as reflected in the title, invoked explicitly in contradistinction to what we may gather from the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. As the authors' state, the premise of *Digital Harlem* is that "unlike most studies of Harlem in the early twentieth century, this project focuses not on black artists and the black middle class, but on the lives of ordinary African [*sic*] New Yorkers."⁹ Thus far, the identification of category of the "everyday" as their object and their stated method of "ethnography," judged in the project's own disciplinary terms, in and of themselves, one may argue, are not necessarily problematic. In fact, this orientation of the project is reflective of what the historian Mark Salber Phillips has identified as the recent trend of "sentimental history for life," which is guided by the question "'what was it really *like*?"¹⁰ This historiographical approach is invested in "retracing the textures of

⁹ White et al., "Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930."

¹⁰ Mark Salber Phillips, "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of Sentimental History for Life," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 65 (2008): 49. Emphasis original.

ordinary life and inward feeling. Studies of this kind are less concerned with causes and consequences than with the intimate anthropology of other times.”¹¹

Digital Harlem may even be reflective of the “strongly democratic instinct” that informs historiographies of this kind in its conceptualization of the category of “everyday” as embodied particularly in the *being* of “ordinary African New Yorkers.”¹² The premise that the “artists and the middle-class” of the Harlem Renaissance somehow fail to represent or exceed the parameters of the “everyday” has been also stated by other scholars of Harlem’s history:

Examining everyday life and work patterns in 1920s Harlem illustrates that the abstracted Harlem of the literary imagination is an inadequate replacement for the knowledge of Harlem to be gleaned through social history. Harlem’s black workers inspired and helped create the abstraction of Harlem, but discrimination prevented them from earning their due; in theoretical terms one could say that their labor never became fully abstracted.¹³

This “discrimination” that Jacob Dorman refers to is both the social reality of discrimination of black workers at the time of the Harlem Renaissance and the discrimination of the mainstream historiography that reifies this history to the abstractions of the “literary imagination.”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Phillips, “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of Sentimental History for Life,” 49.

¹³ Jacob S. Dorman, “Back to Harlem: Abstract and Everyday Labor during the Harlem Renaissance,” in *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited*, ed. Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 75.

Thus, I return to *abstraction* in my “hermeneutic reverse engineering” of *Digital Harlem*, one of the core issues of my methodological analysis of digital forms of knowledge, particularly through the lens of archival studies—the ways in which the critical priorities and value systems are performed through the “order of things.” Although I am not a social historian of the Harlem Renaissance, I am doubtful as to the *Digital Harlem*’s proposition that newspapers and legal records provide useful or meaningful historical account of the “everyday,” again in contradistinction to the era’s literary imagination. Putting aside for the moment the presupposition of the existence of the ontological reality of the “everyday life,” the problem of *Digital Harlem*’s method of abstraction through their “ethnography” lies in the data itself: the reduction of “everyday life” to the sources that are bound to reveal, in contrast to their claim of “ordinary,” the exceptional qualities, namely the criminal elements. Rather than undoing the historical “discrimination” of the Harlem Renaissance, the discriminatory nature of *Digital Harlem*’s data, which is ultimately “capta” as Johanna Drucker argues, emphatically reveals itself by way of reification, in the search categories under “type of events.”¹⁴ The categories of the “everyday,” as one can expect from their data, overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, relate to crime. The categories of crime as the means to identify “ordinary African New Yorkers” is further emphasized by yet another main access point defined by “charge/conviction.”

One must ask, is this really the type of abstraction that furthers our understanding of the Harlem Renaissance, or does it reveal something else entirely? Relatedly, as I have also asked in the “hermeneutic reverse engineering” of my own deployments of

¹⁴ Johanna Drucker, “Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2011). <http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>.

digital tools and platforms, if it doesn't necessarily *explain* the Harlem Renaissance then what does *Digital Harlem* able to *demonstrate* through Google Maps as display? The ethnographic realism of *Digital Harlem* as rhetoric, not just as archival resource, is precisely the impressive scale of its data and its ordering that set the condition of knowing in this digital archive, which is further reified by the display of data points on Google Maps. The limitation of *Digital Harlem* that I point out is not necessarily its partiality. In fact, partiality, in the sense of positionality and limited perspective, is the necessary condition in all forms of representation, whether historiographical or literary, digital or pre-digital. I mention this rather obvious point here because my critique of *Digital Harlem's* ethnographic realism is emphatically *not* that it does not include the literary achievements of the Harlem Renaissance—again, evaluating the project in its own parameters. Partiality itself is not the reason for dismissing the application of digital tools and platforms wholesale, as Amy Proppen argues specifically in regards to Google Earth:

What I wish to reflect upon, rather, is the question of how we might keep ourselves in check. [...] What theories and frameworks might we look toward for an understanding of how to aptly conceptualize the sort of cultural work that such tools ought to accomplish? To this end, I understand the map as both socially constructed and as purporting to represent a 'correct' model of the physical world. I contend that such attempts to portray the physical world through cartographic representation ought not be understood as part of the allegedly positivist project that is

cartographic representation; rather, these representations bear the potential to convey partial perspectives, and are well worth interrogating.¹⁵

As mentioned in my previous case studies, the same can be said about other emerging digital forms of knowledge: exhibits, digital simulation models and information visualization. The reason for my situating this two-part reading of *Digital Harlem*, its technical features and its rhetorical effects, in the context of pedagogy is that the fact of partiality is often obscured by the “instrumentalist” focus in digital scholarship, as I have argued previously vis-à-vis Alan Liu’s call for cultural criticism in the digital humanities.¹⁶ The instrumentalist focus on how alluringly, in terms visuals, and how comprehensively, in terms of data, digital projects such as *Digital Harlem* reveal information often prevents the critical evaluation of their rhetorical effects. Because I am impressed by the project in its own disciplinary and technical terms, and also because I am quite sympathetic to the challenge of representing complexity in and through digital models, I am simply, but also emphatically, arguing for a different epistemological claim for *Digital Harlem* as the authors of this project *themselves* do for their related book project about the history of gambling during the Harlem Renaissance. *Digital Harlem* in its data-ethnography cannot be the “everyday” history of the Harlem Renaissance but rather it is about the history of the existence of criminal activities during the Harlem Renaissance. The discrepancy between the epistemological specificity of *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem between the Wars* and the many layers of ontological

¹⁵ Amy D. Proven, “Cartographic Representation and the Construction of Lived Worlds: Understanding Cartographic Practice as Embodied Knowledge,” in *Rethinking Maps: New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory*, ed. Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin, and Chris Perkins (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115.

¹⁶ Alan Liu, “Where Is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 490–509.

abstraction in *Digital Harlem: Everyday Life 1915-1930*, despite their reliance on the same set of archival sources, serves to affirm the urgency of my project that locates the challenge of the digital ethnic archive not in its inclusion into *the archive* of historiography, but in the critique of ethnographic realism enacted by the digital's particular rhetorical force of realism.

More broadly and perhaps beyond the disciplinary parameters of *Digital Harlem*, what about the history of the Harlem Renaissance that is insufficiently articulated by the black literary imagination? Who really, even by the cursory survey of literary documents as also evidence into the “everyday,” is surprised by the fact that black lives have been historically and systematically invalidated and criminalized in the U.S.? Why must the “everyday” history, or the “sentimental history,” of the Harlem Renaissance be told against, and not “along,” the “archival grain” of its literary imagination?¹⁷ I am not suggesting that we deny the epistemological purchase of the historical project of “filling the gaps” or its anthropological motivation. I am also not suggesting that we should reduce black cultural production to social realism, as I argued against in the context of Chicana/o murals in East Los Angeles. I raise these questions because they are questions regarding the very archival condition that informs my critique of ethnographic realism as it pertains to minoritarian archives in the U.S., in which the history of black lives continues to be the site from which we align and measure other forms and instantiations of difference that have come to matter.

If the project of the “everyday” history of the Harlem Renaissance should exist—conditional because “everyday” as ontological reality is, I would argue, neither possible

¹⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

nor desired—it must work through the ambivalence of the archival condition, or the evidential condition, of black lives: the history of black lives is told through their absence and by their presence that is always already criminalized as evident in the official records of *Digital Harlem*. Such ambivalence as the condition of knowing that must be acknowledged in any historiographical claims of black lives is why Michael Hanchard calls “black memory” a method, similar to the ways the MLA panel on the “ethnic archive,” as I have cited throughout, asks “[s]hould scholars continue to recover and foreground artifacts that reveal indigenous knowledge, or should they reconsider the archive wholesale, questioning its politics and practices, and implement new practices and methodologies?”¹⁸ Hanchard differentiates “black memory” from “state memory,” not simply to restate the obvious historical power dynamic of the dominant and the subordinate, but to suggest that—in more discursive terms, or as I have described in terms of Ann Laura Stoler’s “archival grain”—we might imagine “black memory as horizontally constituted” while “state memory is vertically constituted.”¹⁹ For the archives, then, as material evidence for scholarly interpretation, “black memory” disrupts the “vertical constitution” of “state memory” that prioritizes data such as legal records over the black literary imagination and other modes of cultural production.²⁰ This

¹⁸ Michael Hanchard, “Black Memory versus State Memory: Notes toward a Method,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 45–62; Dana A. Williams and Marissa K. López, “More Than a Fever: Toward a Theory of the Ethnic Archive,” *PMLA* 127, no. 2 (March 1, 2012): 358.

¹⁹ Hanchard, “Black Memory versus State Memory: Notes toward a Method,” 46.

²⁰ An example of community libraries and archives’ role in the dynamics of “black memory” vs. “state memory” is a recent project by the librarian and archivist Phillip Bond in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, which is currently the site of intense “gentrification.” In the midst of the general public discussion that pays attention to the architectural features of brownstones emblematic of the neighborhood and their real estate data, he and the photographer, Niqui Carter, invited local residents to the community library in order to document the “significance, history, and diversity of ‘families’ in Bedford Stuyvesant.” Phillip Bond, “Generation Preservation Project,” 2011. <http://www.bklynlibrary.org/brooklyn-collection/generation-preservation-project>.

verticality of the state archive, when taken to constitute to the “real” of Harlem Renaissance, can only result in tautology: doesn’t *Digital Harlem* ultimately affirm and advance the criminalization of black lives when presented as the evidence of the lives of “ordinary African [*sic*] New Yorkers?” Can its archival mode of address be turned around to affirm, rather, the strategies and the tactics of state power in its oppression of black lives, as evident in these records?

Perhaps the most critique of *Digital Harlem* is offered by Ralph Ellison’s essay, “Harlem is Nowhere.”²¹ Ellison begins by charting an entirely different symbolic geography of Harlem: the basement of a psychiatric clinic that is treating a black patient, through whom Ellison struggles with for the rest of his essay about what is “surreal” about Harlem. He writes that “much has been written about the social and economic aspects of Harlem,” which can only amount to the explanatory pathologization of the patient’s condition: “white men’s arguments” are “not only false but in effect, a denial of Negro humanities.”²² When he writes Harlem is “nowhere,” he does not deny Harlem as “scene of the folk-Negro’s death agony” or as the “setting of his transcendence.”²³ Harlem simply exceeds the account of its achievements and the account of its ills, and even the binary logic of such explanations. He concludes, “in spite of the very fine work it is doing, a thousand Lafargue clinics could not dispel the sense of unreality that haunts Harlem. Knowing this, Dr. Wertham and his interracial staff seek a modest achievement: to give each bewildered patient an insight into the relation between his problems and his

²¹ Ralph Ellison, “Harlem Is Nowhere,” in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 294–302. (Written in 1948 and originally published in Harper’s Magazine in August, 1964.) I thank James Ford for suggesting this essay for my argument here.

²² *Ibid.*, 296, 301.

²³ *Ibid.*, 296.

environment, and out of this understanding to reforge the will to endure in a hostile world.”²⁴ In contrast to Ellison’s framing of the experience of the everyday of Harlem as “surreal,” the data of *Digital Harlem* only hinders the effort to think about the “relation” between its numerous records of criminal activities and the context in which these records were created in the first place. The literary account of Harlem by Ellison, as opposed to the account offered by state records contained in *Digital Harlem*, defers the claim of objective reality of Harlem, and instead invests in narrating its contradictions.

An archive of the Harlem’s everyday life can horizontally conceptualize the evidential value of various forms cultural production, as opposed to vertically placing the records of the state as the “official” account. As Hanchard further argues:

The archeologist of black memory could also be described as a more expansive type of archivist, those collectors of posters, pamphlets, broadsheets, and newspaper clippings, or of 45s and 12-inch underground classics whose circulation does not extend beyond the dance floor and the DJ’s crates—all items of limited exposure that still generate their own traces, circuits, and routes of black memory.²⁵

Such expansion of the archival matters for “black memory” should further activate multiple layers of reality and the interrelated sites of cultural practices of identity, against the single ontological reality and the ontology of minoritarian identity, lest the more expansive archives counterproductively “veer into kitsch.”²⁶ This recognition of the

²⁴ Ibid., 302.

²⁵ Hanchard, “Black Memory versus State Memory: Notes toward a Method,” 53.

²⁶ Ibid., 55. Relatedly, the invocation of “performativity” in queer theory’s critique of the archive is not only for the expansion of the category of evidence to include the materials of “ephemera,” but also the denial of the ontological “real” of queer and minoritarian identities--denial that is the fundamental basis for

horizontal formation of materials of evidence as it applies to other minoritarian histories underwrites the implied disciplinary critique of my project: less sociologically positivist archives in the age of multicultural inclusion; and the digital humanities' turning even more rigorously to its humanistic mode of analysis in its consideration of data and evidence. Alongside of the attention to the subjectivity of data in the disciplines ranging from statistics to anthropology, the digital humanities and archival studies offer productive analytical frameworks that address the cultural politics of data in the current digital age in which the discourse about data often intersects with many continuing social and cultural struggles.

Most recent instance is the controversy surrounding the non-indictment of the police officer who caused the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the political organizing spurred by the #BlackLivesMatter.²⁷ The conservative media praised the prosecution's decision to present an extensive set of evidence to the grand jury—including the witness testimonies that weaken the prosecution's case—and the decision to make all of the evidence available online, as acts of “extraordinary transparency.” On the other hand, the liberal media characterized the set of evidence submitted to the grand jury, as well as its availability to the public, as “data dump.” While the social media in and of itself is not the issue, in his prepared statement announcing the grand jury decision, St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulluch repeatedly dismisses social

queer methodology. Although I support and have directly participated in various queer archives projects in New York and Los Angeles, this second part of José Muñoz' influential critique of the archive is often lost, or perhaps proves to be more challenging in terms of its execution in documentary modes. See, José Esteban Muñoz, “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 5–16.

²⁷ Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, “Black Lives Matter | Not a Moment, a Movement,” accessed December 15, 2014. <http://blacklivesmatter.com/>.

media's evidential legitimacy wholesale in the very opening moments of his statement: "within minutes, various accounts of the incident began appearing on social media. The town was filled with speculation and little, if any, solid accurate information."²⁸ On the other hand, the existence of the video evidence of the death of Eric Garner by a police officer's chokehold, which is barred by the NYPD, also failed to result in the indictment of the officer responsible. These successive events remind us of the fact that the categories of knowledge we call data and evidence are neither objective nor applied neutrally: in the culture in which black lives have been long always already criminalized, "state memory" can wield them to confirm what it already knows and wants to advance. The social media strategy of #BlackLivesMatter, as a counter-archive to "state memory," is an instance of "black memory" through which recent protests against anti-black police state have become documented and shared. As the co-founders of the #BlackLivesMatter argue, its purpose and message cannot be universalized as #AllLivesMatter, for not every life is systematically invalidated as black lives are.²⁹ The continuing legacy of the criminalization of black lives in the U.S. underwrites the "state memory" of *Digital Harlem* and the "black memory" of #BlackLivesMatter towards very different ends, and they remind both the digital humanities and archival studies of the necessity of unpacking the rhetorical dimensions of historical data, "big data," evidence, and archives in our uses of digital platforms and in our analysis of digital culture at large.

²⁸ Robert McCulloch, "Ferguson, Missouri Grand Jury Decision Announcement," *C-SPAN.org*, November 24, 2014. <http://www.c-span.org/video/?322925-1/ferguson-missouri-grand-jury-decision-announcement>.

²⁹ Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement | Black Lives Matter," December 6, 2014. <http://blacklivesmatter.com/a-herstory-of-the-blacklivesmatter-movement/>.

CONCLUSION

The more simple and colloquial version of the title of this dissertation has been “how to think about race and ethnicity with digital tools and platforms?” Occasionally when given the opportunity to expand further, I would rely on the fundamental precepts of the fields I bring together for this project to describe what I have been exploring: “critical race theory has long proposed that identities are constructions but with real consequences, so I try build digital archives that expose the logic of those constructions.” This project as a whole moves away from the more familiar multiculturalist celebration of minoritarian histories and the pursuit of their inclusion into *the archive*, as well as from the techno-utopic celebrations of the digital archive fever. To be clear, however, my main objective is not to deflate each and every claim of progress and opportunity in the fields that intersect in this project, from archival studies and the digital humanities to critical race/ethnic studies. My optimism here for the ethnic archives is that if digital technologies will continue to inform our condition of knowing, then the development of the ethnic archives can explore new modes of representing not only what we already know, but also the critique of *the archive* instantiated by critical race/ethnic studies. Because the current discourse around both digital technology and the archives often advances various notions of objectivity and evidential authority—what I have been broadly referring to as the ethnographic realism of digital archives—this dissertation brings together the digital humanities’ emphasis on the interpretative possibilities of knowledge models and the archival studies’ sensitivity to the issues of inequality in archival practices, in order to imagine minoritarian archives that represent not only the

“real” of identities in documents and records, but also the critique of how identities are constructed to obtain material consequences.

Even as I have argued throughout for the consideration of the issues beyond diversity and inclusion for the epistemological project of the ethnic digital archives, I am also committed to developing sustainable ways of documenting and preserving minoritarian cultures. While counter-archival gestures create the opportunities to experiment with different archival forms that are instantiated by the specificities of the various sites of cultural difference, those digital archives developed externally to the traditional archival infrastructure are more susceptible to the ephemerality of the digital age than those developed within it from the start. The infrastructure of the archival enterprise includes technologies, institutions, standards, and the resources in the form of funding and labor. Even as I welcome the digital vernacularization of archival concepts and practices both in the academia and in the general public, I can attest from the experience of safeguarding my own digital projects from the “planned obsolescence” of innovation that the sustainability of independent and experimental projects remains a great challenge.¹ In the past ten years of working with small community-based organizations to develop their digital archives, I have observed that the most significant difficulties facing non-archival organizations are the most mundane tasks: the administration of even a simple database requires technical knowledge and skills; those digital archives that invite user participation requires regular attention; and the scalability is always a concern for digital projects that begin with limited budget without the assurance of continuing funding in the near future. These tasks—unlike the optimistic

¹ Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

“archive fever” that drives the process of incubating, developing and launching—require the commitment to the less exciting aspects of digital work that remind us of the importance of the core archival work of preservation in digital archive projects.

Perhaps what best captures, in infrastructural terms, the dynamic between the advantages and the disadvantages of creating a digital archive from the margins is the inverse relationship between customization and sustainability: greater the level of a digital project’s customizations of an “out of the box” CMS, for example, more unstable those creative/critical design interventions become as new versions are constantly released. Not burdened by the extensive list of technical requirements to the degree that the mainstream institutions are (university libraries, for example), community-based cultural organizations and individuals often have the greater freedom to explore and reimagine their archives. They have often expressed to me their desire for a different kind of digital archive that captures the uniqueness of their cultural locations. However, as a responsible consultant on archival matters and information design, I must also remind them that the prioritizing of difference over standard practices will limit their archives’ accessibility and preservation in the future: embedded within the digital platforms’ affordances for creative and critical endeavors are the constraints and limitations set by their infrastructure. Infrastructure does not explicitly exclude minoritarian subjects, but it has such consequences simply as the necessary norm. Especially as the access to digital collections becomes increasingly more consolidated through platforms such as the *Digital Public Library of America*, implementing the practices of the mainstream institutions becomes more crucial, lest minoritarian archives

continue to remain at the margins.² The Inclusion of the minoritarian archive into such platforms requires that it is legible by their system at multiple levels (structural and descriptive metadata fields; file format and size; database structure; and search index).

Many open source content management systems developed with particular attention to the standards currently used by the mainstream institutions have allowed, at least to a certain extent, independent archives to develop more structurally sound digital archives. Independent archival endeavors may take advantage of the affordances of the current digital technology to challenge the absences in the official archives of the mainstream institutions, but this does not mean that digital technology itself is the solution for their long-term sustainability. The mainstream archival institutions' increasing concern for diversity, which often adopts the spirit and the process of the community archiving movement, is another step towards the sustainability of digital archives at the margins. As I continue my work both in independent community archives and in digital archive projects in research university settings, I often confront the issues of diversity in relation to sustainability, particularly when dealing with the decision to locate more permanent homes for the archival collections of individuals and community-based organizations. They trust the archivist who can appreciate the context of their materials, as well as the original order and logic of their collections, but they are often skeptical of the technocrats and administrators of the mainstream institutions. They are also quite mindful of the subjective nature of access and preservation, as well as of the necessary pragmatic compromise of their intellectual control implied in the relinquishing of the control of their physical archives.

² "Digital Public Library of America," accessed December 15, 2014, <http://dp.la/>.

The ideal plan of action would be to create a space within the community itself where the materials can be housed and accessed. However, contrary to the funding opportunities for technologically innovative digital archives and for building new digital archives, funding for the mundane tasks of maintenance is scarce. Thus, mainstream public institutions, which already have the infrastructure for sustainability as a part of their general operation, serve a crucial function as they acquire the collections of independent archives. In this process of inclusion by way of incorporation, the challenge of such partnership reminds us of the interconnections between the infrastructure for sustainability and the epistemology of building archives of different subject matters and forms. For the minoritarian archives, how would they continue to articulate their inherent critique of the legacy of *the archive* even as they conform to a certain set of standards for the sake of sustainability? For the mainstream institutions that are committed to the work of diversity, how would they design those standards that allow such critique to come into view? In other words, the cultural politics of inclusion in the archives pose productive challenges for the future of exploring new modes of representing difference.

APPENDIX I: Details of the 3D Model of Estrada Courts

- Project Site: <http://estradamurals.humanities.ucla.edu/>
- Project Authors: David Kim and Michael Rocchio.
- Equipment: Nikon D5000 digital camera.
- Software: Adobe Photoshop for images and Sketchup for 3D model (formerly Google Sketchup).
- Images: 50-100 dpi for each .jpg image; 58 images in total in the model.
- Files: The model was initially in .skp format (readable only in Sketchup), then exported as .KMZ, the compressed version of Keyhole Markup Language (KML) developed by Google for use in Google Maps and Google Earth.
- Estrada Courts ground layout was approximated from the satellite image in Google Earth. The dimensions of the walls measured and calculated by the authors.
- For the surfaces without murals, we used the textures from the Sketchup's warehouse of materials (stucco, brick, concrete, etc.).
- Initially, the model contained higher resolution images of the murals (300 dpi), as well as photographic textures for the surfaces from the digital images we captured at the site. However, we reduced the resolution of every surface to decrease the file size of the model (from ~500mb to ~22mb) for more efficient loading and navigation.
- The model was uploaded to HyperCities, a digital mapping platform developed by UCLA, which displays the contents of KMZ files in Google Earth. HyperCities embeds Google Earth in its interface (requires Google Earth plugin). See www.hypercities.com.
- Each point in the "paths" in HyperCities was given a specific location and viewing angle within the model.
- Each point in the "catalog" path focuses on a mural, and the corresponding text panel provides basic information of the mural (title, artist, year) and the higher resolution image of the mural.
- Other paths in HyperCities reflect the themes of our discussion: "graffiti/placas" and "exterior/interior."
- The files of all authored content hosted by HyperCities.

APPENDEIX II: Details of *Performing Archive*

- Project Site: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/performingarchive/index>
- Project Team: Jacqueline Wernimont (lead), Heather Blackmore, Amy Borsuk, Ulia Gosart, David Kim, and Beatrice Schuster.
- Content Management System: Scalar, developed by The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture at the University of Southern California. See www.scalar.usc.edu.
- Our Scalar “book” contains all of the images in *The North American Indian* digitized and made accessible by Northwestern University and the Library of Congress. The Scalar database does not contain the images themselves but the links to those images and any associated metadata. Scalar pulls the images via the links and displays the images within the “pages” of the “book.”
- The “pages” are organized into sections called “paths.” A “page” may belong to more than one “path,” and each “path” may be linked to another “page” in a different “path.”
- Each member of the project team worked on a “path.” The author of the “path” created connections to the “pages” of other “paths.” The non-linearity of Scalar was used in the project to bring attention to the multiple contexts in which the images may be considered.
- Each “page” follows a template that arranges the content. Options include “text emphasis,” “media emphasis,” “split emphasis,” “display media by paragraph,” etc.
- The files of all authored content of the project is hosted by Scalar.

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