CFP: Archiving Activism in the Digital Age (deadline May 15, 2022)

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Call for contributions
Archiving activism in the digital age
edited by Ann Rigney (Utrecht University) and Daniele Salerno (Utrecht University)

Contemporary repertoires of protest have been adapting to digitally-oriented media environments (Tilly 2006; Hoskins 2017; Treré 2018; Merrill, Keightley, and Daphi 2020), begging the question how they will be archived for the future. Since the global wave of protests against the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the debate on archiving activism in the digital age has gained momentum, bringing activists, archivists, policy makers and scholars into new dialogue. How to preserve the cultural production of born-digital movements, why and what should be preserved, who should do the work, for and on behalf of whom, who can claim the ownership of social movements' legacies-in-the-making? These are just a few of the questions that have been surfacing in recent debates on the entanglements of archiving and activism (Flinn and Alexander 2015, Della Ratta, Dickinson, and Haugbolle 2020; Caswell 2021). Concern about the real risk of losing the traces of recent movements and their cultural production gives to these issues an added urgency.

For several decades now, moreover, there have been growing demands for the digitization of older collections pertaining to social movements from earlier times. This was given a new urgency by the COVID-19 pandemic and the very limited accessibility of physical archives in 2020 and 2021. But it is part of a longer-term trend which reflects the growing centrality of the digital in social and political life, and the growing demand for digitally accessible archival resources that can be used for multiple purposes: academic research, activism, artistic and curatorial projects. The digitization of existing collections calls again for a critical reflection on the risks and opportunities entailed in the digital remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999; Erll and Rigney 2009) of the legacy of past social movements.

At stake in these debates is the digital in its different, although entangled, functions: i) the digital as media used by activists and social movements for and in protests; ii) the digital as technology for archiving the cultural production of present and past movements; iii) the digital as an active agent in archiving processes (Latour 2005), which fixes, through its affordances and algorithms, the conditions for the collection and future retrieval of the cultural memory of protests.

The proposed edited volume aims to contribute to these debates from a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives. It seeks to advance recent work in memory studies, media studies, (critical) archival studies and social movement studies, by bringing into dialogue scholars, archivists and activists (though these roles may overlap). By focusing on the archiving-activism nexus, our aim is also to productively bridge the different conceptualizations of "archive" and in particular the contraposition between the epistemological idea of "the Archive" in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault 1969) and of archives as material – even when "just digital" – socio-cultural spaces (Sheffield 2020).

Contributions may include, but are not limited to, these topics:
- Archiving activism and activist archiving in the digital age: professional and activist epistemologies;
- archiving digital repertoires of protest;
- the legacy of past social movements: digitization, digital remediations and reuses for mobilization in the present;
- how the digital drives memory- and oblivion-making in archiving processes: algorithms and digital affordances;
- methodologies in digital humanities: opportunities and challenges offered by the digital for the study of the cultural memories of protest (distant reading, etc...)
- conditions of circulation and availability of archival material in the digital age;
- digital archives as social spaces for activism;
- new forms of digital or web-based grassroots or self-curated movement archives;
- the effect of copyright and privacy legislations in archiving activism and memory work;
- use of archives for digital curations and story-telling

 Abstract submission deadline: May 15, 2022
Please submit a title and an abstract of around 500 words with a short bio (80 words) to: a.rigney@uu.nl and d.salerno@uu.nl.
Abstracts should reference up to 10 works in the relevant literature and six keywords.
Notification of abstract acceptance: June 1, 2022
Full paper submission: October 14, 2022 (between 4500 and 7500 words, including footnotes and bibliography)

The volume will be published open access.

Editors
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