

D I G I T H U M

A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

Dr. Katja Müller

Researcher

Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

Submitted in: November 2016

Approved in: December 2016

Published in: January 2017

RECOMMENDED CITATION

MÜLLER, Katja (January 2017). "Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History" [online]. *Digithum*, 19, pp. 11-18.

<<http://dx.doi.org/107238/d.v0i19.3085>>



The texts published in this journal are – unless indicated otherwise – covered by the Creative Commons Spain Attribution 3.0 licence. You may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the work, provided you attribute it (authorship, journal name, publisher) in the manner specified by the author(s) or licensor(s). The full text of the licence can be consulted here: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/es/deed.en>.

Abstract

Digital archives, as they are set up online by Indian stakeholders, perform the dual task of involving practices of lived memory and storing archival information. They decidedly claim to preserve the past, and they actively engage users as prosumers on the web who interact with the creation and sharing of the digital archives' content. Two Indian digital archives exemplify how this is done successfully. These archives are thus digital spaces that scrutinize the distinct line between lieux de memoire and milieux de memoire as a conventional concept of distinguishing history from memory. Yet, at the same time, they rely on ideas of History and memory that reinvent notions of archives as authoritarian voices.

Keywords

digital archives, memory, History, India.

Entre la memòria viscuda i l'arxivada: com els arxius digitals poden narrar la història

Resum

Els arxius digitals, tal com són creats pels grups d'interès de l'Índia, realitzen la doble tasca d'incorporar pràctiques de memòria viscuda i d'emmagatzemar informació d'arxiu. Aquests arxius afirmen categòricament que preserven el passat i que involucren de forma activa els usuaris com a consumidors proactius (prosumer) a la xarxa. Aquests interactuen creant i compartint el contingut dels arxius digitals. Dos arxius digitals indis ens serviran per il·lustrar com es produeixen aquests processos. Aquests arxius constitueixen,

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

doncs, espais digitals que exploren la divisòria que separa els lieux de mémoire dels milieux de mémoire, conceptes convencionals que distingeixen la història de la memòria. No obstant això, al mateix temps, aquests arxius es basen en idees sobre la història i la memòria que reinventen la noció dels arxius com a veus autoritàries.

Paraules clau

arxius digitals, memòria, història, Índia.

Entre la memoria vivida y la archivada: cómo los archivos digitales pueden contar la historia

Resumen

Los archivos digitales, tal como son creados en línea por grupos de interés de la India, realizan la doble tarea de incorporar prácticas de memoria vivida y de almacenar información de archivo. Dichos archivos afirman categóricamente que preservan el pasado e involucran de forma activa a los usuarios como consumidores proactivos (prosumer) en la red, quienes interactúan creando y compartiendo el contenido de los archivos digitales. Dos archivos digitales indios sirven para ilustrar cómo se logra esto. Estos archivos constituyen, pues, espacios digitales que exploran la divisoria que separa los lieux de mémoire de los milieux de mémoire, conceptos convencionales que distinguen entre la historia y la memoria. Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo, dichos archivos se basan en ideas sobre la historia y la memoria que reinventan la noción de los archivos como voces autoritarias.

Palabras clave

archivos digitales, memoria, historia, India

Digital archives change the ways we engage with history. They create virtual spaces that invite people to comment, share, and like individual stories and memories, thus allowing archived memories to become lived ones. Digital archives in their used and appropriated form, based on active contribution and sharing, oscillate between writing history and performing memory. They claim to contribute to a corpus of historical information, preserving and ordering it, while at the same time inviting people to contribute material and stories, comment and give feedback, and actively engage in an exchange of and about the material. Digital archives – whereby I refer to the ones that are online and use web2.0 options – preserve and promote, stock and share. As such, they blur the distinct line that Nora (1989) drew between institutionalized places of memories, such as archives and museums, and societies relying on a constant re-establishing of (oral) memories. They become a virtual space between these two antipodes and therefore question the established ideas of the archive, as well as the way memories and histories are defined.

1. Concepts of Archives, Memory, and History

Archives, these long-term repositories of documents, are usually conceptualized as places of history. As Nora (1989) explains, they

are *lieux de memoire*, places of memory, that in fact are not to be equated with memory but rather with fixed and authoritarian history. To make the distinction explicit, he writes “[...] memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority is derived. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.” (Nora 1989:9). Nora’s history is the organised and constructed past, relying on stored and preserved traces or proofs of a distant past, which are then mediated as History, i.e. its official and acknowledged version. It essentially relies on certain places to accumulate signs of the past and to recall the past, in order to construct a memorization of past events, which relates the individual and the collective to archives, museums and monuments as *lieux de memoire*. In contrast, Nora understands memory – a term we, according to him, frequently use incorrectly while actually referring to history – as something social. “Real” memory is alive, is able to change, needs to be enacted in order to exist. It is a form of transmitting the past directly into the present by sharing, telling or performing it. Hence, contrary to history, which is more stringent and limited in its versions, there are as many varieties of memories as there are groups enacting it.

Yet, *lieux de memoire* are not necessarily perceived to be as static and immobile as Nora depicts them. They are subject to

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

the changing cultural context they are embedded in, and their stakeholders are able to decide what becomes 'canon' as actively circulated memory that keeps the past present, and what will be the 'archive' as passively stored memory (Assmann 2008:98). While Nora might characterize this as another instance of History-production, individual reactions, mediations and changing cultural contexts of history – or archival memory, as I will call it below – it cannot be ignored as an influencing factor in commemorative processes. They intermingle to create different individual appropriations, "rooted in the concrete [or] objects" as well as in the "relations between things" (Nora 1989:9). The cultural context becomes even more relevant in in-depth analyses of archival material, as Stoler showed regarding the re-appropriation of historical documents, which can be read against or along the archival grain (Stoler 2009) and therefore produce different stories of the same material. Archives and other *lieux de memoire* have the potential to serve as tools for creating conditions of intercultural dialogue and communication (Zeitlyn 2012), yet they often fail to do so due to the external and internal conditions of storage, political agendas, and visual economies. Controlling *lieux de memoire* and maintaining that control is tantamount to keeping a source of power and authority, to retaining History in an immutable state.

What archival and lived memory have in common is the mediation of memory. They are enabled by media¹ and technologies that transmit, and to a certain extent transform, the content that is to be memorized. Objects are often regarded as evoking memories of the past due to their stable materiality, their haptic and olfactory qualities. Yet it is not necessarily materiality that determines the decoding quality of a medium, but the relationship that develops between the perceiver and the medium. It is the way we relate to objects, be it in tactile or visual terms, which dictates the conditions of memorizing. As Barthes convincingly argued, the photograph – itself a technical reproduction with prominent physical qualities (cf. Edwards 2002) – relies predominantly on the visual content of the image. It allows, through its particular position between here and there as well as past and present, the evocation of intimate associations, deep emotional relations, and personal memories (Barthes 2010). The form and the framing can influence the evocation of individual memories as much as the light or the pose within the image. Things in general, and photographs in particular, can become social agents in interrelation to the perceiver (Gell 1998), and they can bear the capacity to mediate memories.

2. Digital Archives and Commemorative Practises

In new media we have an agent based on binary code shaping our commemorative culture. Its different materiality influences archival and consequently commemorative practises through altered technological possibilities (cf. Ernst 2013:55ff.). New media is readily available and embedded in an increased velocity of sharing and perceiving information, so that, as van Dijck (2008) pointed out regarding photography, digital media includes a shift from memorizing towards identity formation and experience. Digital media, also due to their different materiality or immateriality,² become more a device for conveying and experiencing than of preserving. The medium becomes more mutable, its purpose seems to be the moment, not endurance. That does not imply a complete negation of the commemorative qualities of digital media. But they challenge conventional conceptions of mediated memory and call for a 'new memory ecology' (Hoskins 2011) that, according to Hoskins, involves altered temporalities of the self and a less stable anchorage of memory in 'post-scarcity' times when information is always available in overwhelmingly manifold dormant memories. Turning the view from dormant memory to lived memory in digital archives (as the case studies of two Indian digital archives will show below), we need to regard new media particularly as a medium stressing visual qualities and written words. The haptic and olfactory qualities are replaced by the screen as the prominent transmitter (cf. Manovich 2001:94ff.), which leads to the assumption that information and communication technology (ICT) favours visual and audio-visual media over three-dimensional objects.³ We usually encounter (audio-) visual representations of binary code, in which a medium is constructed or transformed. If memory is still evoked through these media, it has to be through qualities other than material ones. Digital media and its commemorative qualities take us closer to Barthes' concepts of a photograph's capacity to create a punctum (an emotional reaction of remembrance and intimate relation to the portrayed), whose visual referential qualities are maintained on the screen.

Digital media also promises to be more inclusive in allowing people to appropriate its context. While I would refrain from conceptualizing the whole internet as an archive (Kimpton und Ubois 2006), it provides a new output and an extended audience for institutionalized analogue archives, as well as delivering a

1. I use the term media here as a plural of medium, referring to an 'object', a carrier of information, not to the mass media communication business.

2. For an argument on the materiality of digital media see, for example, Miller and Horst 2012.

3. Even though representations of 3D objects have become more and more complex and extensions to the screen allow for an inclusion of other senses, the majority of digital media transmitted to humans through the computer is visual or audio-visual.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

space for establishing new archives in digital form. The promises and hopes related to digital archives are numerous. Digital forms of archives pledge to provide access to a potentially unlimited audience and thus to break up visual economies entrenched in analogue *lieux de memoire*. They are – provided the perceiver has Internet access – reachable by everyone at any time and thus offset (and indeed level) the differences related to economic or social capital, which prearranges access to analogue *lieux de memoire*. Digital archives are embedded in the Internet, which itself through its net structure opposes hierarchical structures between different websites. It rather provides cross-links and additions that allow flat navigation from one website to another. Besides this, the digital archive itself can contain a structure that differs from analogue standards of ordering, and therefore undermine conventional power structures. Thus, the Internet and its included digital archives theoretically provide a more democratic option for perceiving media as a basis for commemorative practices through access and sorting mechanisms.

Yet, these assurances often do not bear close scrutiny. The digital gap still provides a major hindrance towards anything close to an unlimited audience and erodes much of the Internet's levelling capacity. The anti-hierarchical structure of both the internet and digital archives is undermined by the fractional character of programmes and software, what Manovich calls their modularity (Manovich 2001:30). One is not free to create digital archives from scratch but has to adapt their form to existing modules of hard- and software not only due to practicality, but also in terms of applicability. The frame is pre-set by – mostly male, white, Euro-American – programmers and by commercial and entertainment enterprises' interests. Navigating through the Internet is to a large extent also guided by companies. Processes of transnational democratisation are, as Bohman persuasively argues, a possible but not intrinsic characteristic of the internet (Bohman 2004). And navigation through digital archives might be broader compared to their analogue counterparts, but is still framed by the ideas and interests of those creating and controlling the archive's structure and content.

However, despite these shortcomings, ICT does bring media into the presence of an extended viewership. Applying Gell's notion of positioning the perception of an image between the perceiver and the medium to digital media allows us to situate the meaning-making here between the reproduction and the person in front of the screen. While the context of a digitally (re)produced medium can be further extended through additional information such as metadata, linked content or extensive written or recorded narratives, hence making digital media a mediator distinct from other media, it still distributes an image and with it the idea of

it. That allows the creation of individual or collective memory in relation to the medium and its particular framing. Digital media re-spatialize and re-temporize events (Hoskins 2011:28). But memory is always recreated and possibly slightly altered even if direct associations with media exist (van Dijck 2009:160). Representations online will not create the same memory as an analogue medium, but the differences pale in the light of always differing perceiver-dependent memory-constructions. Digital archives cannot aim at the evocation of a predetermined memory, but rather contribute to processes of actual cultural production associated with memory creation.

Cultural Production and Memory Creation in Indian Digital Archives

As examples of digital archives within a shared context, I will refer to two Indian archives, the Indian Memory Project and the 1947 Partition Archive. Both were created independent of established institutions by members of the so-called Indian middle class (cf. Varma 2007) and represent online archives in India's digital landscape, which is, despite single success stories and e-literacy projects, dominated by an English-speaking⁴ elite from the urban middle and upper class (Chopra 2006). The Indian Memory Project and the 1947 Partition Archive make extensive use of web2.0 elements and social media to engage Internet users in their projects. While the Indian Memory Project invites people to contribute old photographs along with a story of the image's content, the 1947 Partition Archive trains so-called Citizen Historians to record audiovisual material of people who experienced the partition of India and Pakistan and provides photographic portraits and summaries of their stories in written form online. The Indian Memory Project in its image-film describes itself as "The World's first Visual & Narrative based Archive / [that] presents true stories of the Indian Subcontinent / contributed by people from all over the world." It argues that "[the contributed stories] are your stories. / and your stories make our History. / Contribute a story today. / visit www.indianmemoryproject.com" (Yadav 2013). In a slightly longer statement the 1947 Partition Archive explains its mission in its image-film as follows:

"Shockingly there exists no memorial / or public archive devoted to Partition / devoted to the memories of those whose lives were affected / There exists NO source of witness voices for us to learn from. / so we decided to create one. / We began interviewing partition witnesses and became Citizen Historians / a grassroots VOLUNTEER movement / soon it

4. This reflects also in the language of the two websites, which are available in English only, while the contributions to the online archives are made in English as well as in (other) Indian languages. A profound considerations of the reasons, advantages, and disadvantages of excluding these languages from the websites would go beyond the scope of this article. For linguistic takes on minority languages on the Internet see for example Cormack and Hourigan 2007.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

went viral. / More than 500 people from over 20 countries signed up to become Citizen Historians / And uploaded nearly 1000 interviews in 9 languages / some were telling their story for the FIRST TIME. / Attracting MILLIONS of interactions on social media / The time has come to take this to the NEXT LEVEL. / This is where we need YOU. / Let's preserve 10,000 stories by 2017 / Together, we can preserve history, one story at a time. / And create a source of learning for generations to come. / Before it is too late. / Before the memories are forever lost. / Join the movement. / Support this campaign. BECOME A DONOR now." (Bhalla 2013)

Both archives not only make extensive use of the terms history, memory and archive, but allude to the sharing aspect of their projects, an aspect Anusha Yadav, the founder of Indian Memory Project also stressed in an interview.

"I do advertising all the time in the sense that I make use of social media very well. I tweet about it, I have a Facebook page, and I've also found ways in which advertising works in my favour. The main part is to be inclusive and there are other people doing great things, other people who have written about history, other people doing interesting things on history. If there's any history that concerns India, it is going to be a part of that Facebook page, and it really works to my benefit to be inclusive rather than saying, "This is my project and that is your project and I will not show you", because that is the problem in the first place that nobody shares information and it's that much more valuable for some people, some people are collectors and private collectors in museums, so I was very clear that I would be very inclusive on social media. I mean entirely on the subject, not on your own brand per se. I think there's more merit in being more inclusive on the idea of history." (Interview author with Yadav 2016)

A look at the websites and Facebook pages of both projects confirms this statement. The 1947 Partition Archive, which unlike the Indian Memory Project features only information on its own project, seems even more successful in generating followers and interactions on social media:⁵ by October 2016 the page had more than half a million likes and single entries were shared up to 500 times and liked 1200 times. While the popularity of the digital archives is supposedly also enhanced through offline networks and social interactions, the projects evidently work as virtual spaces of exchange and interaction. With their content relating to past events or historical material, both online projects function as an ample platform for telling stories of the past, evoking memories

and sharing them with a large community. Individual stories become part of a collective memory, which in contrast to the storyteller's primary contribution do not need to be re-created in combination with personal experiences of the past, but are appropriated in the present and processed into a person's own memories and thoughts about the past. By transporting ideas and stories into the present online world, the two projects partake in cultural production and provide the setting for an active memorization, the appropriation and conscious reflection of past events. This constant transportation of the past into the present through continuing exchange via social media makes the two digital archives instances of lived memory. The fact that people do not exchange their thoughts and feelings on some distant documents stored in an institutional context, but on contributions and testimonies by ordinary people they relate to in some distant way (I would term the archives 'community-based') surely adds to this dynamic enactment of memories.

At the same time, the two projects decidedly claim to be archives, documenting and preserving stories about the past. The Indian Memory Project describes itself as "an online, curated, visual and narrative based archive [...]" (www.indianmemoryproject.com/about) and so far lists in numerical order – but also searchable by themes, keywords or time – 165 entries related to the past of the Indian subcontinent. The 1947 Partition Archive has the archival aspect already included in its name and by October 2016 provided 2,450 archived entries on its website, aiming for 10,000 by 2017. While at present it remains unknown if the audio-visual material will be available online beyond representation in shortened visual and written form, it is in its raw form archived and available to researchers and educational media makers, among others, upon request (interview author with Jones 2016). The 1947 Partition Archive is "committed to preserving this chapter of our collective history" (www.1947partitionarchive.org/about) and its content is, like that of the Indian Memory Project, an instance of archived memory.

Given that digital archives can be cases of both archival and lived memory, as these two Indian examples show, the clear distinction that Nora drew between memory as lived experience and history as stored and archived memory, seems hard to retain. The line gets blurred, if not dissolved altogether (cf. Haskins 2007). It is not only technologies, networks, software and information infrastructures, as Hoskins suggests (2011:23), but (also) practises of active appropriations of the websites as commemorative spaces. Digital archives, if successfully involving Internet users as prosumers, become models for a combination of lived and archived memory in one virtual space. While attempts to activate archival memory and to transform *lieux de memoire*

5. I use the term social media to refer to communication channels the projects provide links to or accounts for as well: Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Pinterest, or Google+.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

into lived experiences are not uncommon in contemporary offline approaches and a reflexive museology, the online possibilities and their range surely outshine these. It is the active involvement in both contribution and perception, in producing and consuming that characterises these online archives. Their concurrent ability to serve as a preserving storage facility makes them a unique instance of *memory*, that sustains its position in a virtual space and at a time that is more often than not characterized as one of acceleration, where information and stories vanish as fast as they appear, where momentary self-portrayal overrules commemorative practices and the trend to amass information leads to amnesia. In contrast to these surely pre-existing properties of cyberspace, the two Indian digital archives prove, by generating emotional, personal interaction among different stakeholders, that cultural production in terms of lived memory is an expedient possibility conducted online. Through providing an obviously needed space for these practices of present-day engagement with the past, both archives challenge the conventional concepts of memory and archives. They are instances of memory that can include both preserving and active commemorative practises.

3. Reinvention of History (with a Capital 'H')

The two digital archives with their position between archived and lived memory inevitably lead to a reconsideration of the term 'archive', since they demonstrate that these are not only hermetically sealed institutions, but places of interaction and exchange. Simultaneously, they make for a critical reassessment of memory as they combine aspects of both lived and archived memory in one virtual space. However, both the Indian Memory Project and the 1947 Partition Archive are not as straightforward with this scrutinizing as it seems at first glance. While including and sharing aspects provides for larger audiences and a general openness with wider access and lower barriers, it includes curating and selecting instances that are made transparent by the projects. Yadav clearly states on her website that "All images and narratives are curated, edited, corrected and if required rewritten." (<http://www.indianmemoryproject.com/about/>), and the 1947 Partition Archive in their FAQ section refer to a "random selection of story summaries with photographs" that are available on the website and Facebook page, thus relegating to an editing process taking place here, while the raw material, which will be mediated through the Citizen Historians' questionnaire and the recording, is preserved on a digital cloud (<http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/FAQ>). The two digital archives make their project-specific intervention and selection processes explicit; they do not have the ability to do away with all hierarchical characteristics of archives (not least since digital infrastructure, as mentioned, excludes people and sorts content).

At the same time, they reveal through the quoted image-films their particular concepts of commemorative practices and the role they supposedly play within these. The 1947 Partition Archive in its statement seems to relate to Nora's *lieux de memoire* instead of distancing itself from it – highlighting the fact that 'no memorial or public archive devoted to partition memories' currently exists – is positioning the 1947 Partition Archive directly in that void and depicting it as a potential *lieu de memoire*. Stating that the aim is to 'preserve history', the makers of the archive contrast it to lived memories, which are about to be lost. While this is reminiscent of early anthropologies' salvage approach, it raises questions about the opposition of oral and written – in this case in binary code – history. While there is undoubtedly the option of personal memories remaining untold or limited to a very small group of close family members hearing these stories, the opposing of lived, fading memories with fixed, archived ones recalls a distinction that not only tends to regard the recorded higher than the non-recorded, thus including a valuation of commemorative practices, but also contrasts the lived online practise of the 1947 Partition Archive. As the film mentions itself, the 1947 Partition Archive 'attracted millions of interactions on social media' and hence is more than a preserving authority, but rather enables lived memories to be actively carried forward, updated, and revived.

It is likely that the recurrence of conventional distinctions of lived memories and archival practises results, firstly, from the image-film's imagined public audience. The image-film of the 1947 Partition Archive aims to generate attention, participation, and donations. Hence it is written in the form of an everyday communication on commemorative practises, which is widely understood. As Nora mentioned, we often use the terms of memory and history in an indistinct way. Film is supposed to be a medium that reaches people; it is therefore fit to tie in with a public discourse on memory instead of with academic debates on the topic. Secondly, the 1947 Partition Archive as a newly established digital archive is involved in sensitive politics of writing about partition (cf. Pandey 1992), and it looks not only for funding options but also for ways to effectively carry out its mission. Therefore there is the need to be recognised as a trustworthy institution, an agent in cultural production and a means of possibly coming to terms with past events. In such a context, the 1947 Partition Archives draws on widely established notions of archival tasks and oral memories.

The Indian Memory Project in its image-film goes further with its statements on history, memory, and the past. On the one hand it more vigorously stresses the participatory aspects of the project, as they make up the major part of the text communicated to the audience. Most of the image-film's time is taken up by historical photographs, which the movie zooms into or hovers over, accompanied by a single line describing the story behind it. Yet, the few moments of the image-film where the written text as an explanation has priority over the historical image also foregrounds

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

'true stories' and 'History'. While one can again argue that the image-film is created for a general audience and hence would not pay too much attention to particular debates on single terms, it is noteworthy in the context of cultural memory production that it claims to deal with 'true' stories. A statement such as this clearly distinguishes itself from supposedly less trustworthy accounts, and in a political sense underpins its position as a credible heritage actor, whose reliability derives from both the platform's crowd-sourcing and the historical photographs' material basis. Yet it also situates the project within a concept of lieux de memoire as preserving and fixing accounts, as choosing, examining, and verifying memories. In that regard the reference to 'History' with a capital 'H' seems important, as it can be understood as relating to Nora's notion of official history construction. While existing in practise and also in its self-description as an instance of lived memory focusing on sharing material as well as memories, the Indian Memory Project also tries to establish itself as a recognized institution with a respective amount of cultural capital attached to it, which makes it an active stakeholder in H/history production. Hence it oscillates in self-description and lived practise between dissolving conventional categorizations of history, memory, and archives and their conceptual reinstallation.

4. Conclusion

Digital archives bear opportunities and challenges. Situated within the Internet, they include the possibility of lowering barriers of access while establishing new ones, beginning to break up visual economies while constructing distinct structures, and including a larger audience that might exclude certain parts of societies. Their central potential lies in the development of a prosumer, who is used to consume and produce content at the same time. If online projects involve the audience in both primary content production and feedback and content-sharing, as the Indian Memory Project and the 1947 Partition Archive do, they provide ideal preconditions for cultural production that is a shared endeavour.

This common venture makes historical documents part of a commemorative practise relating to oral history, as it is embedded in conversations. These conversations on social media usually take a written form, yet the internet's acceleration and shift to momentary practices, self-portrayal, experience and even amnesia suggest a close relation between orally transmitted memories (recalled, told and enacted for the moment) and those wrapped up in commentaries, likes and shares. Both are instantaneous, vanishing through time, but are able to be dug up and retold, even if they are recalled or perceived slightly differently due to the teller or the mediating screen. The 1947 Partition Archive and the Indian Memory Project are virtual spaces in which people actively engage with each other on particular stories from the past and thus transform these stories into shared and lived memories.

At the same time digital archives are precisely that: archives that aim to preserve and store. Along with this usually come processes of sorting, ordering and evaluating, which the two mentioned projects make transparent, but are not in a position to dissolve. What is dissolved, or at least blurred, is the strict distinction between archival and memorizing practices understood as history and memory. Digital archives have the potential to combine both aspects in one virtual space and by their recursion to the term archive, implicitly demand a reassessment of the term archive too.

However, this reconsideration, while stipulated through the digital archives' practice, is alleviated through the self-portrayal of the two examples. Conventional concepts of both archival practices, memory and history production, which refer to verifying and differentiating between memory and history, are re-established. This needs to be seen in the context of the particularly sensitive (Indian) aspects of contemporary history, and in a broader sense to the political involvement of cultural memory production. Digital archives are usually set up with the aim of outreach, and hence the actors involved in their production and development are engaged in providing the spaces needed for memory production and in framing these. They become determining factors in these forms of cultural production, even if leaving more room for democratic negotiation processes than conventional analogue archives. To negotiate or consolidate their own position and to open processes within memorial practises attached to archives, digital archives in their online form provide a first, important step, which is not intended nor able to be revolutionary, but is reformative nonetheless.

References

- ASSMANN, A. (2008). "Canon and Archive". In: A. Erll and A. Nünning. *Cultural memory studies. An international and interdisciplinary handbook*. Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 97-108.
- BARTHES, R. (2010). *Camera lucida. Reflections on photography*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- BHALLA, G.S. (2013). *Image-film 1947 Partition Archive*.
- BOHMAN, J. (2004). "Expanding dialogue. The Internet, the public sphere and prospects for transnational democracy." *The Sociological Review*. 52, pp. 131-155. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00477.x>
- CHOPRA, R. (2006). "Global Primordialities. Virtual Identity Politics in Online Hindutva and Online Dalit Discourse." *New Media & Society*. 8, Iss. 2, pp. 187-206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806061942>
- CORMACK, M. and N. HOURIGAN (2007). *Minority Language Media. Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- EDWARDS, E. (2002). "Material beings. Objecthood and ethnographic photographs." *Visual Studies*. 17, pp. 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137336>

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History

- ERNST, W. (2013). *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- GELL, A. (1998). *Art and agency. An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HASKINS, E. (2007). "Between Archive and Participation. Public Memory in a Digital Age." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 37, Iss. 4, pp. 401-422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940601086794>
- HOSKINS, a. (2011). "Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn." *Parallax*. 17, pp. 19-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605573>
- KIMPTON, M. and J. UBOIS (2006). "Year-by-Year. From an Archive of the Internet to an Archive on the Internet." In: J. Masanes. *Web Archiving*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 201-212. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-46332-0_9
- MANOVICH, L. (2001). *The language of new media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- MILLER, D. and H. HORST (2012). "The Digital and the Human: A Prospectus for Digital Anthropology." In: D. MILLER and H. HORST. *Digital Anthropology*. London: Berg, pp. 3-38.
- NORA, P. (1989). "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations*. 0, Iss. 26, pp. 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>
- PANDEY, G. (1992). "In Defense of the Fragment. Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today." *Representations*. Iss. 37, pp. 27-55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928653>
- STOLER, A.L. (2009). *Along the archival grain. Epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- VAN DIJCK, J. (2008). "Digital photography. Communication, identity, memory." *Visual Communication*. 7, pp. 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357207084865>
- VAN DIJCK, J. (2009). "Mediated memories as amalgamations of mind, matter and culture." In: R. van de Vall and R.P. Zwijnenberg. *The Body Within. Art, Medicine and Visualization*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 157-172. <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004176218.i-228.61>
- VARMA, P.K. (2007). *The great Indian middle class*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- YADAV, A. (2013). *Image-film Indian Memory Project*.
- ZEITLYN, D. (2012). "Anthropology in and of the Archives: Possible Futures and Contingent Pasts. Archives as Anthropological Surrogates*." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 41, Iss. 1, pp. 461-480. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092611-145721>

Katja Müller

(katja.mueller@zirs.uni-halle.de)

Researcher at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

Dr. Katja Müller is researcher and research coordinator at the Center for Interdisciplinary Area Studies, (ZIRS) Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. Specialized in visual anthropology and ethnographic museums, she is currently working on impacts of digital processes concerning archives from India.

Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg
Universitätsplatz 10
06108 Halle (Saale)
Germany



UNIVERSIDAD
DE ANTIOQUIA