

The Pedagogical and Scholarly Prospects of Web Archiving

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Brief Abstract

Who among us has not experienced anguish at encountering a broken link? A website that has disappeared? Whether supporting student learning or conducting research, the ephemerality of web content introduces a limitation on use. Websites are valuable resources for research and teaching, and yet persistent access to content is unreliable. As scholarship continues to expand its embrace of alternative formats, websites are only going to increase in importance as resources for teaching and scholarship. This panel, comprising two librarians, a digital archivist, and a web-archiving service representative, will discuss how web archiving and annotation can be employed to expand the scope of research and teaching. Topics include: uses and pedagogical considerations for web archiving and annotation; strategies to facilitate adoption of these technologies; and potential concerns raised by these practices. Our goal is to engender thoughtful conversation and to encourage increased awareness of and engagement with web archiving and annotation.

Full Abstract

Who among us has not experienced anguish at encountering a broken link? A website that has disappeared? Whether supporting student learning or conducting our own research, the ephemeral accessibility of web content introduces a limitation on use. Websites are a valuable resource for research and teaching, and yet persistent access to their content is unreliable. As scholarship continues to expand its embrace of alternative formats of production and dissemination, websites are only going to increase in importance as resources for teaching and scholarship.

Web archiving is not a new technology, having been embraced by cultural and higher education institutions to curate their online presences and legacies. However, its applications for the classroom and alternative research are less explored. Librarians are well positioned to advocate for, support, and manage the capture and collation of browser-based creative and scholarly output.

This panel brings together two librarians, a digital archivist, and a member of a web-archiving service to initiate a conversation around the ways in which web archiving and annotation can be employed to expand the scope of research and teaching. Some of the issues we will introduce include: What are some of the uses and pedagogical considerations for web archiving and annotation for the classroom? What strategies can librarians employ to facilitate adoption of these technologies? What are some potential concerns raised by these practices? Our goal with this session is to engender a thoughtful conversation and to encourage and support more widespread awareness of and engagement with web archiving and annotation.

Biographies

Mark G. Bilby is a Senior Assistant Librarian of Scholarly Communications and Lecturer in Religious Studies at California State University, Fullerton. He holds a PhD (Virginia) and MSLIS (Drexel) and maintains an active research profile in the areas of Scholarly Communications, Institutional Repositories, Digital Humanities, Open Access publishing, Open Educational Resources, Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, and Religion and Literature in the Late-Antique Mediterranean. He is the author of the monograph *As the Bandit Will I Confess You* (Brepols/Strasbourg), co-editor of *Reconsidering Arminius* (Abingdon) and lead co-editor of the forthcoming *Classical Greek Models of the Gospels and Acts* (Claremont).

Jillian Lohndorf joined Archive-It in 2016. Previously, she worked in the Archives and Special Collections at DePaul University and Rotary International, and as Web Services Librarian for The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. She holds a Master of Science

in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dana Ospina is the Digital Initiatives Librarian at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Prior to accepting her current position, she served as the Open Content and Digital Publishing Librarian at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Dana's interests include undergraduate publishing and digital scholarship in the Humanities. She holds an MSI from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Zach Vowell is the Digital Archivist at the Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Since receiving his M.S.I.S. from the University of Texas at Austin in 2006, he has worked on a variety of digital projects, all of which have emphasized the close relationship between digital objects and the software that creates them. Besides his work as Software Preservation Network Co-PI, or with digitization and born-digital archiving, Zach's professional interests include digital repository infrastructure development, alternative description and access methods for archives, and archives as data.

Contributions

Jillian Lohndorf

Capturing web-based content is increasingly essential for Archives, both to meet records retention mandates and to reflect in-person and online communities. Knowledge of web archiving, including the terminology, processes and tools, is an increasingly important skill for archivists. This presentation delves into the overview of the field of web archiving and explores the technical and programmatic sides of web archiving. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the current web archiving landscape and its resources, processes, and challenges.

Mark G. Bilby

The pedagogical potential of web archiving can begin in our daily Reference/Instructional routines. Reference Desk visitors can get brief tutorials on the Wayback Machine. Research Consultations can include Archive-It collection searches, and guides can include regularly updated links to major web archival collections. Instructional sessions can include bibliography exercises demonstrating how to link-rot-proof assignments. Web archiving can even provide a reliable backup of Library instructional content when vendor servers go down.

We can also empower our faculties and campus partners with the tools of web archiving. Outreach might begin with campus Instructional Design and Online Education teams to ensure their administrators and staff understand the importance of linking to stable web content. Faculty development workshops can give practical examples of web archiving for course

design, interactive research-based in-class assignments, and publishing. Writing Center administrators and tutors can benefit from training on the Wayback Machine. Even policy committees can ensure that archival webpage generation and citation is included in official guidelines for information literacy outcomes and writing requirements.

The full pedagogical potential of web archiving depends on strategic coordination and advocacy among Librarians. We need talented our instructional, web, and graphic designers to create model guides, content blocks, interactive tutorials, and videos. Through our professional organizations such as CARL, we can pass resolutions and/or recommendations that will mainstream web archiving. For example, we can recommend that 1) accrediting bodies adopt archival web citations as a core information literacy competency, 2) the editorial boards of major academic style manuals require permalinked web citations in their next editions, 3) Wikipedia and other public information hubs adopt editorial standards ensuring all cited web content is archived and permalinked, and 4) Content Management Systems, Citation Management Systems, and Research Management Systems include not only permalink checking but also automated web permalink generation and fixing.

Dana Ospina

Considering the preponderance of web content both created and consumed by students, my primary contribution to the panel concerns how introducing web archiving into class projects and assignments can support the shared mission of librarians and instructional faculty to foster critical thinking and digital literacy development in students

Frequently, the way in which the internet and web content are framed provides an incomplete picture: Students often hear that “once you put it out on the internet, it’s there forever!” Data retention, screen grabs, etc., do all serve to undermine the act of erasure and yet, from the perspective of those invested in web archiving, there is the undeniable reality that digital content does in fact disappear or, at least, becomes inaccessible for retrieval. And this content is often the fragile digital content that we endeavor to preserve. Helping students to understand that the digital content they produce and consume is not necessarily as persistent as they may believe can help them to understand the value and necessity of web archiving.

Additionally, as librarians we regularly help students to understand how to locate and evaluate sources for their own scholarship. This important skill must extend to resources that do not come into existence through the traditional scholarly communication process, but rather are generated in non-traditional and emerging formats. Librarians frequently hear from students that their syllabi states, “No online sources” or “No websites” on assignments, and yet that directive is outmoded because new scholarship is increasingly being produced in formats that contradict this imperative.

Zach Vowell

For academic librarians involved in information literacy outreach and instruction, there are two ways to approach web archives: 1) arm yourself with information about web archives for your instructional sessions, or 2) adopt web archiving technology so that you can offer it as a service to faculty and the development of their curriculum. In either approach it is helpful to know what role web archives can play in the information landscape. First, web archives serve as persistent resources of information that lives on the web. Secondly, faculty increasingly assign such web-based information as readings in their courses. But what do faculty expect their students to get out of these web resources? Do they primarily need the text? Or should they be interacting with the resource as a web document? If the latter, it is useful to recognize that web archives can change (not just disappear) over time.

Within scholarly communications, from simple class assignments produced on a Wix.com site to serious academic work produced by a faculty member in a digital journal (example of the latter:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180517175005/http://kairos.technorhretoric.net/22.1/topoi/denson/index.html>), students and faculty are creating scholarship on the web in ways that don't allow for simple print-outs or PDF copying. Such scholarship can be integrated into institutional repositories in simple ways, if they are archived. Digital humanities practitioners may also benefit from a library offering web archiving services.