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Save As... Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies

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Save As…
Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies

by Diana Taylor

introduced by Bruce Burgett and Miriam Bartha

with responses by Angelica Macklin and Micah Salkind

Foreseeable Futures #10
Position Papers from

Imagining America
Artists and Scholars in Public Life

Imagining America

Artists and Scholars in Public Life

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present Diana Taylor's keynote address, "Save as… Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies," delivered at Imagining America's 2010 national conference in Seattle. Entitled *Convergence Zones: Public Cultures and Translocal Practices,* the 2010 conference extended the focus of the 2009 IA conference in New Orleans, *Culture, Crisis, and Recovery,* by inquiring into the intersections of existing and emerging media technologies, the linkages between practices of public and digital scholarship, and the temporal and spatial scales through which we understand the communities we engage through our research, teaching, and activism.

Diana Taylor's address provides a rich entry point into these complex questions about digital media and its implications for scholarly practice. Drawing on her experience with the Hemispheric Institute, a multinational collaboration of artists and scholars grounded in an online archive of performance work across the Americas, Taylor insists that we need to imagine communities that are not only local or national, and publics that are not exclusive to the present. Attending to the ways in which digital innovations inflect earlier technologies for creating and transmitting knowledge, she invites us to reconsider our practices of public scholarship as they move through the epistemes of embodied performance, archival preservation, and digital circulation.

Seattle proved an apt venue for this reconsideration. The half-day site visits that followed Taylor's address allowed conference participants to experience the mixing and melding of digital and public modes of engagement at nine different locations, ranging from the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience and the University of Washington Bothell wetlands to

the 911 Seattle Media Arts Center and the web-based Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project. All of these sessions foregrounded questions about what it means to create and sustain sites of engagement where divergent forms and scales of community and community making converge.

Two responses to Taylor's address press these questions further. Grounding their comments in their own digital projects, both Angelica Macklin in her filming and archiving of Taylor's address and Micah Salkind in his research on personalized archives, suggest that new media technologies enable, for good and bad, new ways of enacting our individual and collective relations to diverse pasts, presents, and futures. Both stress that digital technologies, like pre-digital archives, demand much more than mechanical practices of "saving [the past or present] as…." They also require critical acts of imagination that create and curate habitable spaces across what Salkind calls "divides of time and digital placelessness."

No doubt these questions will continue to resonate as IA moves to Minneapolis-St. Paul for the 2011 conference, and beyond. We hope you enjoy the writing contained here and we look forward to seeing you at future conferences. For details, please visit the Imagining America web site at *www.imaginingamerica.org*.

Bruce Burgett and Miriam Bartha
2010 IA Conference Co-Chairs

Save As…
Knowledge and Transmission in the Age of Digital Technologies

The digital raises new issues about memory and knowledge production/transmission in the so-called 'era of the archive.' Technologies offer new futures for our pasts; the past and present are increasingly thought through in terms of future access and preservation. This temporal dislocation perfectly captures the moment in which we currently find ourselves in relation to digital technologies—the feeling of not being coterminous with our time—the belatedness and not-there-yet quality of the now. As my colleague Clay Shirky puts it, it's as if we once again inhabited the uncertainty of the early 1500s. Looking back at the Gutenberg era now, it is easy to describe the world before the invention of the printing press in the early 1400s, or after the spread of print culture in the late 1500s. But what about that long transition period when people knew where they'd been but had no idea where they were headed?[1] That's where we all find ourselves now—academics, artists, scientists, publishers, computer whizzes, designers, and economic forecasters alike.

The anxiety, however, cannot be limited to technology—to whether this or that system or platform will predominate. Neither can we attribute it to competing economic models brought into conflict by shifting consumer habits or to the struggles for control played out in many arenas from national interest to global markets. Rather, we know from that earlier shift from embodied, oral cultures to print culture that what we know is radically altered by how we know it.[2] While embodied cultures relied on the 'now' of physical presence and relations, 'being there' together for transmission, print made it possible to separate knower from known and transmit knowledge through letters, books, and other documents over broad stretches of time and space. In an earlier work I described these epistemic systems as the "repertoire" of embodied knowledge—the doing, repeating, and mimetic practices that are performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing (in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge transferred from body to body), and the 'archive' of supposedly lasting, stable objects such as books, documents, bones, photographs, and so on that theoretically resist change over time. While the 'live' nature of the repertoire confined to the ever-changing 'now' has long lived under the sign of erasure, the archive constructed and safeguarded a 'knowable' past that could be accessed over time.

The different systems provoke different ways of knowing and being in the world—the repertoire supports "embodied cognition,"[3] collective thinking, and knowing in place, whereas archival culture favors rational, linear, and

so-called objective and universal thought and individualism. The rise of memory and history, as differentiated categories, seems to stem from the embodied/ documented divide. But these are not static binaries, or sequential pre/post, but active processes—two of several interrelated and coterminous systems that continually participate in the creation, storage, and transmission of knowledge.

Digital technologies constitute yet another system of transmission that is rapidly complicating western systems of knowledge, raising new issues around presence, temporality, space, embodiment, sociability, and memory (usually associated with the repertoire) and those of copyright, authority, history, and preservation (linked to the archive). Digital databases seemingly combine the access to vast reservoirs of materials we normally associate with archives with the ephemerality of the 'live.' A web site crash reminds us of the fragility of this technology. Although the digital will not replace print culture any more than print replaced embodied practice, the ways in which it alters, expands, challenges, and otherwise affects our current ways of knowing and being have not completely come into focus. If the repertoire consists of embodied acts of transfer and the archive preserves and safeguards print and material culture—objects—what to make of the digital that displaces both bodies and objects as it transmits more information far faster and more broadly than ever before? Here I will argue that the digital that enables almost limitless access to information yet shifts constantly, ushers in not the age of the archive, nor simply a new dimension of interaction for the repertoire, but something quite different that draws on, and simultaneously alters both.

Again, I want to insist that the embodied, the archival, and the digital overlap and work together and mutually construct each other. We have always lived in a 'mixed reality.'[4] The Aztecs performed elaborate ceremonies in attempts to mirror and control the powerful cosmic forces that governed their lives. Sue-Ellen Case argues that the medieval cathedral staged the virtual, while 17th century theatre patented its ownership of virtual space.[5] Clearly, the technologies of the virtual have changed more than the concept of living simultaneously in contiguous spaces. Losing oneself in a literary work of fiction, or getting caught up in the as if-ness of a performance, or entering a trance state in Candomblé, have long preceded the experience of living an alternate reality provided by the virtual realm online.

But the digital and the virtual are not interchangeable, even though they are often used as if they were; the change in technologies is profoundly significant. Since the late 19th century, for example, Kodak has socialized people into living with and using new technologies. They equate the increased independence, mobility, and leisure time of class privilege with the modern and highly portable art of photography. The affluent could make memories

now to use later. In order to sell memory as a commodity, Kodak also actively promoted nostalgia as an epistemic lens—the urgency of the photo rests on our knowing that the photographed object/subject will be lost, that the present vanishes, and that these happy moments are bound to end. The nostalgia is built into the technology itself—a memento mori, as were the first miniature paintings of loved ones. These early technologies stage the vanishing 'now' to construct a past that can be accessed (and mourned) at some later time. The pace of the socialization into the digital has accelerated vertiginously.

As paradigms and practices shift in the storing and transmission of knowledge, we are getting glimpses into the range of implications—from the most practical (how and where do we store our materials if we want to preserve them) to the most existential (does the epistemic change radically alter our subjectivity). Are the changes qualitative or quantitative? Does the current shift resemble past ones (say the transition from an oral culture to print) or does the move towards digital technologies exact its own specific social and ethical presuppositions?

While the digital reconfigures both the live and the archival, I will start with the latter. The new digital era is obsessed with archives—as metaphor, as place, as system, and as logic of knowledge production, transmission, and preservation. Why?

The term 'archive' has become increasingly capacious, interchangeable with save, contain, record, upload, preserve, and share, and with systems of organization such as a collection, library, inventory, catalogue, and museum. Archive seems to magically transcend the contradictions between open and closed, democratic and elitist; a fetish, it covers over several contradictory and irreconcilable mechanisms of power.[6] Since the Archon served as the place where official documents were filed and stored in ancient Greece, the archive has been synonymous with government and order. But without understanding the power and control that underwrite the archive, it's difficult to assess the political and economic implications of what is saved and what is forgotten. Before discussing what I feel is at stake in these changing definitions and distinctions, I will clarify how I understand 'archive.'

An archive is simultaneously an authorized place (the physical or digital site housing collections)[7], a thing/object (or collection of things— the historical records and unique or representative objects marked for inclusion), and a practice (the logic of selection, organization, access, and preservation over time that deems certain objects 'archivable'). Place/thing/practice function in a mutually sustaining way. The 'thing' is nameable, storable, and preserveable, imbued with the power and authority—perhaps even aura—of both place and of selection. We know the thing is important because it has been selected to be preserved in the archive. It does not matter whether the thing

was made to be saved—carbon copies of letters and even daily newspapers or handouts at a protest march take on a special status in the archive. In turn, notions of historical accuracy, of authenticity, authorship, property (including copyright), specialized knowledge, expertise, cultural relevance, even 'truth' are underwritten by faith in the object found in the archive. This circular legitimating epistemic system again affirms the centrality of the place. The archive comes to function, Foucault noted, not simply as the space of enunciation, the place from which one speaks, but also (and primarily) "the law of what can be said."[8] Place/thing/practice exist in a tightly bound connection in which each relies on the other for its authority. Each has a different logic and politics of making visible.

But why has *archive* gained such enormous power or, better, become the site of such contestations of power as we move into the digital age?

On one hand, digital technologies offer the updated Marxist promise for the 21st century: that we—individual users—now control the means of production, distribution, and access to information, communities, and online worlds. While the capitalist grids and surveillance systems sustaining the digital remain, if anything, stronger than ever, the egalitarian and even revolutionary promise is compelling. In 2006, *Time* Magazine declared *YOU. Person of the Year* because YOU control the information age. [Figure 1] YouTube invites us to "broadcast" ourselves. Facebook allows us to share our daily lives with our community of friends. Twitter provides real time updates on where we are and what we're doing. Second Life offers us a chance to design our own avatars and explore, shop, meet, and live online in ways that perhaps can't happen in 'first' life. Philip Rosedale, its founder, envisions life as a project rather than an existential condition—a "meta-verse," as opposed to a universe.[9] There is no doubt about the potentially democratizing power of internet technologies particularly (as opposed to television) that seem to offer as many points of entry and navigation as there are users. The role of Facebook in organizing rallies in Turkey, texting by protesters demonstrating against the G-20, and Twittering in Iran recently indicate a level of inclusivity and immediacy in the digital that would be unthinkable in archival practice. I take the contradictory,

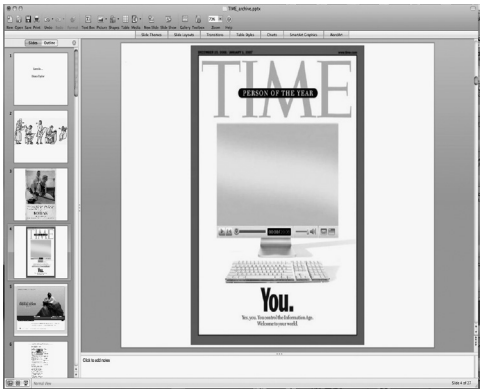


Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 1

complicated, multivalent aspects of digital technologies as a given, a necessary starting point. What I am questioning, however, is whether digital technologies merely extend what we do in embodied and print/material cultures (the repertoire and the archive) into cyberspace, or whether they constitute their very own system of transmission that share some of the features we are used to while moving us into a very different system of knowledge and subjectivity.

What is at stake in this argument? In my last book, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, I asked what was gained (or lost) by extending archive to include the "live"?[10] Embodied practices—measured by the knowledge regimes sustained by the archive, I argued—fail to provide hard evidence of the past. The impossibility of archiving the live came to equate absence and disappearance. Historical documents prove that the land belonged to the settlers, not to the Native populations, etc. The personal and political repercussions have been devastating. Here, I pose a similar question—what is gained (or lost) by using the word archive to describe the seemingly democratic, participatory, non-specialized, readily available uploading, publication, and access of materials in cyberspace?

Some digital archives function much in the way brick and mortar archives do—the Hemispheric Institute's Digital Video Library [Figure 2] that I helped create is an online archive. HIDVL is a growing online repository of some 600 hours of non-downloadable streaming videos of performance from throughout the Americas that is free and accessible for viewing. HIDVL started in the early days of online video archiving—in 2000—as a special collection of New York University Libraries and will be maintained for a very long time—some 300 to 500 years.[11] Each hour of video costs more than $1,000 to process, not counting the intellectual labor that has gone into curating the materials, developing a tri-lingual interface, creating artist profiles, indexes, search tools, and so on.

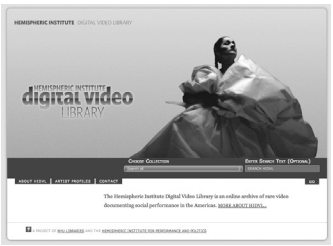


Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 2

Different technologies spur different practices (and visa versa) and different things to collect, study, and theorize. Digital technologies far exceed print in offering scholars and artists a way to both document and consult live practices. Video captures a sense of the kinetic and aural dimensions of the event/work, the physical and facial expressions of participants, the choreographies of meaning. We knew that wonderful performance work in the Americas had either not been documented, or if it had, videos were rapidly decomposing in boxes under artists' beds and in their closets. Digitizing them would not only preserve them but also make them widely and easily accessible—a major issue in

Latin America where universities have limited holdings and publications very limited circulation. We were also eager to explore the theoretical complexities of archiving performance and the complicated relationships between live performance and its mediations.



Regina José Galindo, PLOMO courtesy R.J. Galindo

Figure 3

On one level, then, we were simply transferring video from one digital format to another. On another, we were commissioning and recording performances that we then transferred to HIDVL—so while we were adding to the collection we also helped generate new work. Some performances stage the archive—revivals based in part on old scripts and videos. Other performances, such as work by Anna Deavere Smith, are better known as video than as live solo work. Some performances become themselves only through the process of documentation (say, a Regina Galindo [Figure 3] piece staged for the camera and known only through photographs or video). We have born digital materials—that never had an 'original' in another medium [Figure 4] and hybrid work in which archived videos of performances provoked new live and online performances. These materials give rise to new scholarly thinking about the many lives of performance (past and present), allow us access to work and traditions that we cannot see live, and encourage us to reflect on what happens to 'live' events that rely so heavily on context and audience when shown to people from very different contexts. I would love to speculate what viewers in 500 years will make of Rev. Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, but this is not the time. [Figure 5]



Photo by FULANA, courtesy FULANA

Figure 4



Photo by Julio Pantoja, courtesy of the Hemispheric Institute

Figure 5

The politics of the copy, rather than the 'original,' helps us imagine HIDVL as a post-colonial archive. We return the materials and a digital copy to the creators who maintain the rights. We capture/copy the original signal of the videos and store them in Iron Mountain (the archive of archives—the new "digital authority") to be updated and copied into new formats as the technologies change. The objects in the digital archive *require*, rather than *resist*, the 'change over time' I associated with the traditional archive. But 'copy' as a form of transmission also differentiates the archival

from the digital—and most profoundly from the repertoire. People may copy the way that others dance or speak, but we usually call this mimesis or imitation—a form of learning through doing or parodying another's actions. Each iteration differs from the next—living creatures engage in recognizable behaviors that are not performed the same way twice. Even with strenuous discipline, embodied practices will always show a slight degree of variation. A printed copy of a book, however, is virtually indistinguishable from others of the same run. The only differences stem from use—an underlined word, a torn jacket. Nonetheless, the number of books in a run is finite. If I give away my last copy, it is gone. The function Control C *(copy)* allows me to copy automatically, without a discernable limit. Unlike the archive, based on the logic and aura of the original or representative item, the digital relies on the logic and mechanism of the copy that enables the migration from one system or format to another that secures 'preservation.' *Save as.* Interestingly, the aura that comes from the selection process can accrue to the digital copies archived in collections. Aura may have as much to do with the nature of the selection process as with the status of the thing.

In other ways, however, HIDVL replicates the hierarchies and exclusions inherent in the archival project itself. The process of selection and valorization by experts maintains the logic of the archive intact. Dreams of unlimited access seduce users to participate in the colonialist fantasy that total access is not simply an ideal but a right. While performance scholarship worries more about context, audience, and reception than about the 'original' or 'authentic' (impossible insofar as performance is never the same way twice), the human effort that goes into this project, the emphasis on training and expertise, the institutional auspice provided by the university, and the required levels of financial support makes us facetiously compare ourselves to medieval monks.

Nonetheless, most of what people call online 'archives' are not archives though they may have some archival features. Skits posted on YouTube or other sites are not *archived* even though YouTube has been referred to as a 'media archive.'[12] This is actually not a technological issue, or even a preservation issue—storage is cheap. It's a commitment issue—the owners may or may not commit to preserving these materials long term. Further, there is no selection process for materials uploaded online. No one vouches as to its sources or veracity. Expertise is irrelevant. The materials seem free and available to anyone with Internet access—avoiding the rituals of participation governing traditional archives. Power and politics continue to underwrite access, though at first it's not clear how.

These so-called digital archives can be characterized as what N. Katherine Hayles calls a skeuomorph—"a design function that is no longer functional in itself but that refers back to a feature that was functional at an earlier time."[13]

The trashcan icon on our computers that makes a swishing emptying noise is a skeuomorph. So are digital documents and stickies—all reference past functions to help users adapt to new ways of organizing information. It's the familiarity with these past *things* and *practice*s that facilitates the leap into a virtual place via technologies most people cannot really comprehend or control. The things and practices of course are not the same either. Online items are composed of bits, not atoms. Digital technology demands that everything/practice be transformed into an object and tagged. Our relationship with the thing also changes—we can link to an image but we cannot hold, touch, taste, or smell a person or object. Memory of past usage, however, is programmed into the ways we approach the technologies of the future. But this memory—our individual and collective memory of embodied behaviors—of course is not to be confused with Kodak's glossy print memories, or with the memory on my computer or, increasingly, the move to huge online operating systems such as Web 2.0 with enough memory to support YouTube or Google.[14] Now we are entering Web 3.0 with interactive functions that move our memories of being able to annotate, chat, and work collaboratively online. Rather, my memory, invoked by my documents, assures me I am still part of an uninterrupted system of knowledge production that has only been shifted to another, faster, more efficient platform.

This, however, is not the case.

Place/thing/practice change online. Again, the three are deeply interconnected and altered in and through digital technologies. The spatiality of the archive as a 'public building' gives way to the paradoxical ubiquity and seeming no-where-ness of the digital archive.[15] The site-specific character of performance repertoires, that unfold in the here-and-now also give way to the multi-sitedness of the web. We are all seemingly 'here,' live, now, online—no matter where the 'here' might be. The 'here' of the repertoire is immediate; the 'here' of the archive is distant, but locatable; the here of the web is immediate and (only apparently) unlocatable.

Some of the new digital variations severely challenge the dominance and logic of the archive. Many of the very large projects (like Google Books) are commercial, though they claim to provide free access of incomplete versions of texts, thus assuring neither access nor preservation, though the order icon is ready at hand. Google claims sole ownership of 'orphan' books—an end run around laws pertaining to content, authorship, and copyright. If print culture produced the copyright, it's not clear yet what legal and legitimating mechanisms will control issues of access and transmission online.

As important as the pressure on the 'thing' or content, perhaps, is the invisible politics of place. Where do these collections and archives live? Google et al own the operating systems and databases that enable access

to their massive repositories. This poses other legal issues not covered in conventional copyright agreements. By owning the operating system, these commercial giants in fact become the ultimate guarantor of value and control. They can censor materials, cherry-pick titles, and rescind licensing privileges for us who now lease rather than own copies of the book.[16] These digital practices loop back into print culture as well. I will point to only two of the most obvious repercussions: First: who wants to pay for a book they can access free online? I am not against freely sharing materials—Latin American scholars and students survive on pirated books and articles. Nonetheless, it's important to note that what's online is not free. Second: the ambiguous nature of authorship and authority online have spread to print culture where journal articles signed by notable researchers are in fact produced by pharmaceutical companies, further eroding confidence in the validity of sources. The economic models have long-term repercussions across the range of archival practices having to do with understandings of content, ownership, peer review, copyright, and so on.[17]

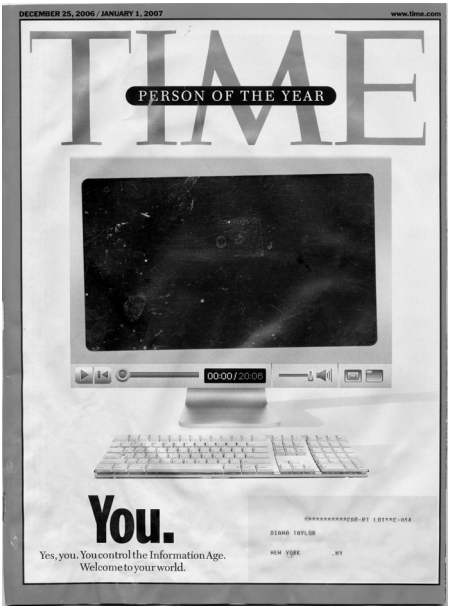


Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 6

Preservation of digital materials, thus, is not the happy by-product of digitizing or uploading. While it may be true that "data never die" it is also true that they live as bits of information that we might not be able to access. Changing technologies and platforms render our materials obsolete far more often than they archive or preserve them.[18]

Finally, I would like to take a quick look at the complicated and changing ways embodied, print, and digital cultures affect the what we know and how we know it by going back to *Time* magazine's 2006 issue of Person of the Year. Here is an image of my copy. *Time*. Person of the Year. 2006. [Figure 6] A computer with a thin red line reminiscent of YouTube cuts across the monitor running towards 00:00/20:06; its screen is a reflective silver shiny Mylar mirror. "You." on the bottom left-hand side. "Yes, you. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world." Nicely balanced on the cover,



Photo Francis Pollitt, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 7

to the right of You is… well, 'me'—sort of. The mailing sticker has my name and address on it. The cover proclaims the imperative to perform. You. Insert yourself here. Yes, You. Your face on the cover! There's a twist here too. While the magazine requires an embodied response from me—I need to hold it in my hands and up to my face to see myself —the design conceit of the video monitor with the timeline transports me to the digital. I try to align the discursive You with the embodied me. I hold the magazine close. [Figure 7] Even so, I hardly recognize myself. This distorting mirror shows You (me) as not me, only the vaguest image, a concept more than a person. And who is the invisible 'I' that names me You? Is it Uncle Sam's pointing finger from the WWII posters? Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market? Althusser's hailing, "You!" The unseen eye of surveillance that demands "If You See Something, Say Something"? [Figure 8] Or a combination—a parody of hailing and recognition, Martin Buber's I and Thou minus the I.



Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 8

Inside the cover, an ad for Chevrolet announces "THIS IS OUR PERSON OF THE YEAR" [Figure 9] and the TRUCK OF THE YEAR [Figure 10] that dominates the environment. The contest, and contestation, of who really controls the world and its resources start before I even get to the Table of Contents.



Figure 9



Photos Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 10

Here is the issue in *Time's* online 'archive.' [Figure 11]

The bold black "You." dominates the screen. The "Yes, You." is centered under the screen rather than to the left. Who needs a mailing label online? The delivery system is quite different. The reflective surface is gone. *Time*'s Managing Editor acknowledges the challenges in reproducing the effect of the mirror "when there's no one standing in front of it." So *Time* created an animated online version using photos apparently submitted by readers that appeared in the print version to keep something of the interactive quality of the original. [Figure 12] This, clearly, is a different kind of performance where You/I is positioned as a spectator to other people's photographs rather than as the subject/protagonist. The online You becomes the object of my looking, one more commodity.

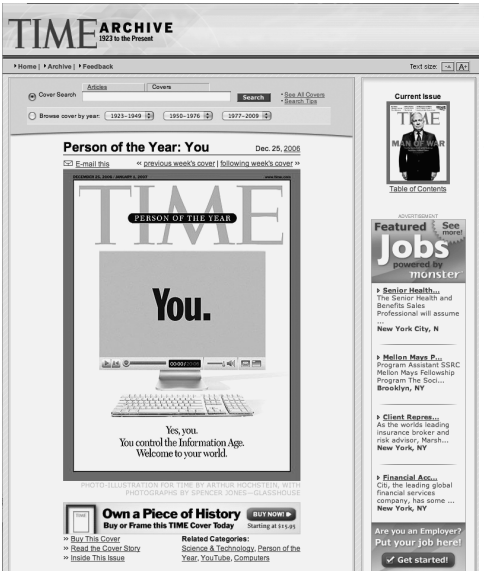


Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 11



Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 12

It does not take much to see that these photos could not have been generated by readers, since they are all posed in identical, candy-colored boxes. Again, a photo simulated to look like YouTube. You also comes in all colors. With one odd exception, You is young, beautiful, under thirty, happy, self-satisfied, "cool," independent, on-the-go, not doing much of anything except listening to music or performing for the viewer. Only two of the men seem to have traditional professions—the doctor and the soldier. The 'new' You is a global citizen. Mobile ethnicities transcend geographical divides. Race and gender are now a 'style' or fashion statement. We're all post-racism, post-sexism, the images suggest. Space is produced in a studio backdrop. You is unlocatable in other ways as well—there are no hints as to where people are or where they've come from; no other people in the shots, no family photos. Two woman photograph themselves—very You. The celebratory images affirm embodiment—the designer body seemingly provides an entry point to the world. But these are not the bodies of the repertoire. This You actually exists not in relationship to but as separate from. There is no outside, no exterior with which You might maintain a relationship—the interpenetration of self/exterior that Merleau-Ponty wrote of. Inter-subjectivity is possible only through technology.[19] You might chat and text but not talk or read. This You is the product rather than producer of the Information Age. THEM.

There is much more to say about this construction of You, both as Person of the Year and in these images, which cannot be included here, but it is important to note that the online You is an elusive object—when I tried to

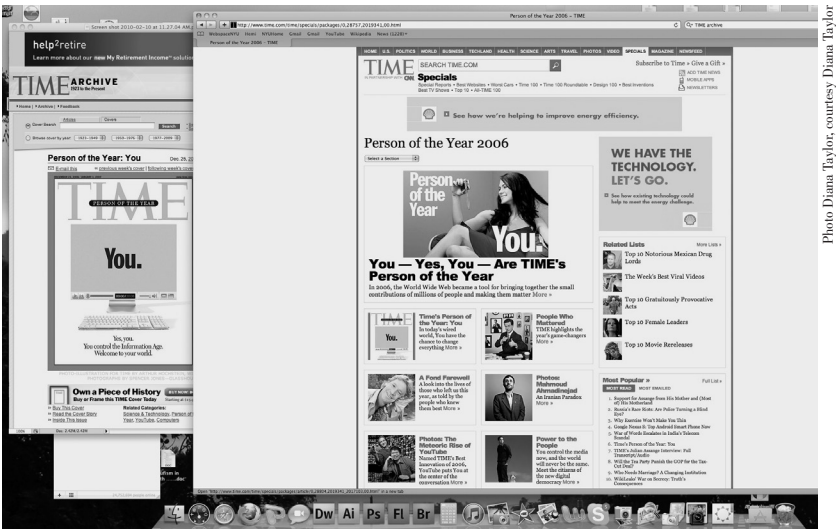


Photo Diana Taylor, courtesy Diana Taylor

Figure 13

access the virtual gallery a year later, it was gone. (Links took me to Vladimir Putin.) When I looked again after six months, some of the images from the gallery were online, but as loose images, not as part of the magazine's layout or organizing concept. However, other images, not included in the original publication, had also been added as if they were part of the original while others had been re-inscribed with logos of other web sites. [Figure 13] What kind of archive is this that erases rather than preserves the traces of its former incarnation?

The *Time* archive, then, does not maintain the objects, or even digital renditions. My experience with the issue is different. I cannot hold it. I can't flip pages. There are no page numbers online. Reading has morphed into navigation (or surfing). Instead of linear and sequential, cause and effect, the digital is about simultaneity, interruption, and multitasking. Everything written for online media tends to be short; the digital has its own attention span. I engage in politics online even as I do something else. The essays, extracted from the issue, are searchable and clearly attributed to authors and identifiable as URLs. But I can't get a sense of connections between various social, economic, and political relations by examining the layouts and the physical placement of essays and ads. Where is the happy cowboy—the 'real' person of the year according to Chevrolet? I cannot go back and examine the magazine issue as a (flimsily) bounded microcosm of cultural concerns, fears, and strategies made visible in the competing messages. Instead of an editor in charge of putting the materials together, the online curatorial process is driven by data-mining techniques and crawlers to identify patterns of information in a database. I too am being constantly updated with today's ads—all programmed to pick up keywords and customize the display to suit 'my' tastes. This too is all about me/YOU but in a different way. It is my profile, not the editor's, that arranges the information for me. The web's interactivity filters my information and sends it to those who pay for access to me. As Wendy Chun notes: online, in order to use, one has to agree to be used.[20]

This digital 'archival' practice, I believe, can prove profoundly anti-archival. The shift from the archive to the digital has moved us away from the institutional, the confined, the long term of Foucault's disciplinary society to the 'control' society outlined by Deleuze—free floating, short term, rapidly shifting. We move from the analog to the digital, from signature to password, from citizen to nomad, from typographic man to graphic man, as McLuhan put it.[21] For better and for worse, the politics of the archive are not the politics of the digital.

What counts as embodied knowledge has also morphed. Cyberspace has forced us to name and delimit the 'real.' 'Real time' is not the same as the present. 'Live' is not the same as alive. An online community is not the same

as a group of people. The 'flesh' body is not the same as the very powerful electronic body—the one whose credit ratings or medical history or suspicious activities can sink an application or have a person strip-searched at the border?[22]

The digital has also provoked an upset in terms of expertise. Many major scholars feel totally incompetent with ever-changing technologies—the young are the true masters of this field. But even the young know less than the younger. It's not just the ever-accelerating generational shifts that make people feel they are out of the meaning-making loop. The subject as consumer is tied into the rapid cycle of obsolescence necessary to sell. "Forgetting," as Paul Connerton notes, "is an essential ingredient in the operation of the market."[23] The feeling of not being coterminous with our time, then, is built into the technologies themselves. The anxiety about loss and forgetting, I believe, might explain our current obsession with archives and the nostalgia both for embodiment and for the object. Technologies code the affect in the constant mandate to *save* and *save as* and we experience the symptom—the need to preserve not just *things* (documents, bones, fossils) but ways of *thinking* and *knowing*—sociability, affect, emotions, gestures, memories, etc, and *processes*—i.e., the ways in which we work, select, transmit, access, and preserve. But the digital, I suggest, will not replace archives or repertoires. If anything, earlier distinctions between online and offline have crumbled for the many of us—across the social spectrum—who are now never offline either because we have cell phones or because our money is kept in a bank account. The simultaneity of these systems of transmission makes us think about them in new ways. Archival practice, once a devastating tool of empire, now seems the guarantor of the 'authentic' and enduring. Digital technologies have only heightened the appreciation of embodiment. Perhaps the current rush to 'archive' has less to do with place/thing/practice and more with trying to save and preserve a sense of self as we face the uncertain future, emphasizing our agency in the selection and meaning-making process that we fear threatens to outpace us.

End Notes

1 Clay Shirky, "Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable." *http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2009/03/newspapers-and-thinking-the-unthinkable* accessed July 14, 2009.

2 Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

3 See Frans de Waal, *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society.* New York: Harmony Books, 2009.

4 Mark B. N. Hansen, *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

5 Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual.* New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 9 and 51.

6 Anne McClintock referred to the archive as fetish in the October 2, 2009 meeting of the Engendering Archives working group, CDAD. Columbia University.

7 The archive means *"there,* where authority, social order are exercised" as Jacques Derrida puts it, *"in that place." Archive Fever,* 1. Translated Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

8 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language.* Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 129.

9 YouTube (November 22, 2006). "The Origin of Second Life and its Relation to Real Life" YouTube.

10 Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

11 See "Jerome McDonough: Expanding the Stage for Political Theater" *http://www.apple.com/pro/profiles/mcdonough/index2.html.* Accessed December 16, 2010.

12 Jean Burgess and Joshua Green refer to YouTube as "a media archive" among other things in their book, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture.* Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2009. p. 5.

13 N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Post-Human.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 17.

14 Ron Eglash, in *Computing Power,* cautions of the shift of computer memory to large operating systems: "In terms of individual use this is a move toward democratization through lay access, but in terms of business ownership it is a move towards monopolization, as only large-scale corporations such as Google can afford the economy of scale that such memory demands place on hardware" p. 60. In *Software Studies/a lexicon,* ed. Matthew Fuller. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2008.

15 Critical Commons for Fair & Critical Participation in Media Culture has a community generated archive of lectures and media clips. The Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education at USC has an archive of approximately 52,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses available at their center and online. The online description of the Internet Archive reads: "The Internet Archive, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, we provide free access to researchers, historians, scholars, and the general public."

16 There is no need to burn books when they can simply disappear. "Takedown notices" often have more to do with business competition than with copyright infringement. *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Millennium_Copyright_Act,* accessed Sept. 28, 2009.

17 The peer review process, vital in establishing the authority of print journals, is being undercut in print culture as well as online. In *A Second Opinion,* Arnold S. Relman, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* notes the widespread practice of authors evaluating the effectiveness of drugs that have

economic ties to pharmaceutical companies. Their findings are suspect and the process is ineffective. An article in *The New York Times,* "Unmasking the Ghosts: Medical Editors Take on Hidden Writers" by Natasha Singer and Duff Wilson states: "In medical journal circles, the exorcism of industry financed editorial assistance even has its own name: ghostbusting," (Sept 18, 2009, B1).

18 Other organizations are currently dealing with similar issues—the financial and copyright implications of creating collections and even archives of copies. Every digital archive has to face these economic, technological, and legal challenges. Open access online increasingly devalues content in what Chris Anderson has called the "migration to Free" (*Free: The Future of a Radical Price,* New York, Hyperion, 2009, p. 140). He notes "the computer industry wants content to be free. Apple doesn't make its billions selling music files, it makes it selling iPods. Free content makes the devices it plays on more valuable," p. 142. A related question of 'free' content and costly devices is being argued in the courts now with respect to Amazon's Kindle. Google, also in court, now claims sole ownership of 'orphan' books—another end run around laws pertaining to content, authorship, and copyright that the archive made possible. If print culture produced the copyright, it's not clear yet what legal and legitimating mechanisms will control issues of access and transmission online.

19 Cool and color-saturated, posing for a camera, You is something-to-be-looked-at, the object of an unidentified gaze. You's body is a project, something it has rather than something it is. The image performs a possible future. With enough exercise or dieting or make-up, we too could be You.

20 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, p. 130.

21 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," from _OCTOBER_ 59, Winter 1992, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 3-7. Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Ed. Lewis Lapham, MIT, 1994.

22 EDT's, *The Recombinant Theater and the Performative Matrix, http://www.critical-art.net/books/ted/.*

23 Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting." In *Memory Studies,* Vol 1, No. 1, January 2008, p. 67.

Response to Diana Taylor's Keynote Address

Digital Dust: Filming for the Digital Archive

by Angelica Macklin

> *"Technologies offer new futures for our pasts; the past and present are increasingly thought through in terms of future access and preservation. This temporal dislocation perfectly captures the moment in which we currently find ourselves in relation to digital technologies—the feeling of not being coterminous with our time—the belatedness and not-there-yet quality of the now."* – Diana Taylor, 2010

This year Imagining America (IA) organizers took great efforts to recruit photographers, videographers, and cellphonographers to document the National Conference. I was asked to film several speeches, including the keynote address by Professor Diana Taylor. This film would become part of the IA digital archive, along with photos, papers, and other documentation of the conference. The point was to share the events with broader audiences and facilitate exchange between attendees who couldn't be physically in concurrent sessions during the conference. My particular task seemed appropriate given Taylor's topic: "Save as… Archiving Memory in the Age of Digital Technologies." It was a chance to embody the practice of filming for the digital archive and to imagine its implications for current and future use.

Filming Taylor was itself an act that linked the live and the digital. As Taylor organized herself in front of the podium, she projected a powerful presence. But from the eye of the camera, her body seemed deceptively smaller in the digital world. Her PowerPoint presentation was displayed across the stage. My camera, however, only showed her face. During editing, I incorporated her slides as overlays, so the video switches from her face to the corresponding slide. This editorial choice means that we lose certain qualities that are only available in the live performance, including Taylor's expressions as she interacts with her slides and the audience's reactions.

Other choices produced similar effects. As I worked on "cleaning up" the video, with color correction and titling, I noticed a point where Taylor made a statement and then quickly corrected herself. As an editor, I made the choice to cut the first statement so the "error" was erased. My reasoning was that the edited version is the talk she meant to give. This act begs the question of whether erasing this ten second clip effectively deprived the archive of a part of Taylor's humanity. Should the film be as close a replica as possible to the live, mistakes and all? Or is editing an act of producing a more perfect version

of Taylor as author, expert, and knowledge producer? This scene of archiving-in-practice is an instance of how, as a filmmaker and editor, the digital author makes choices that have bearing on what is included or absent in the archive.

Taylor's video, which is hosted on my personal Vimeo account, embedded in the IA web site, and linked to the IA Facebook page, is an example of the complexity of digital archiving practices today. According to Taylor, "An archive is simultaneously an authorized place (the physical or digital site housing collections), a thing/object (or collection of things: the historical records and unique or representative objects marked for inclusion), and a practice (the logic of selection, organization, access, and preservation over time that deems certain objects 'archivable')".[1] A close look at IA's Facebook site suggests it meets most of these criteria. It has been authorized by IA; it is a collection of photos, resources, links, and posts "marked for inclusion" by IA; and it has a common logic of practice that filters for materials related to activities of the IA community.

Missing, however, is a commitment to preservation, something Taylor acknowledges as central to the practice of archiving. Archiving is currently uncertain on Facebook. IA may have a commitment to preservation of Taylor's talk, but the structure of the technology used to access and share the video between multiple sites contributes to the difficult task of using web-based social networking tools for longer-term preservation. As a mash-up between historical archive practices and online social networking practices, the IA Facebook page becomes the portal through which the archive is shared, accessed, and used, yet the original continues to be hosted elsewhere. It makes the collaboration between the site where an artifact is stored and the means by which the data is linked, organized, and accessed a relevant factor in the design of any digital archive.

As with non-digital archives that preceded them, digital archives today serve as building blocks, created by people, for knowledge preservation and social construction. It is the network of scholars and cultural practitioners behind the archive that transforms society and its collective memory through the very practices and ideas generated by people using the space. People on the IA Facebook site are sharing, participating, associating, and building fellowship around their common work and scholarship. These are the four elements communications scholar and media critic James Carey attributes to any ritualistic view of communication.[2] Documenting, centralizing, and sharing these practices is essential to building upon knowledge that is being generated by public scholars and practitioners and serves to preserve the memory and practice of such work. IA's Facebook page is a means to these ends, since it links communities of practice across time and space.

As Taylor points out, however, the temporality of these linkages makes it difficult to grasp the implications of digital archives for future use, especially without a clear picture of where technology is going or how human communication is evolving. What we might consider is how these short-term archives are contributing to our construction of collective memory and serving our need to share ideas that are relevant to our lives in a particular time and place. Current digital tools may not provide the most enduring methods of archiving for the long term, but many of them seem useful for producing and sharing knowledge in the short term. As we continue to build the digital world through our contemporary archiving practices, we might hope, but not ensure, that future scholars, practitioners, and digital archeologists will find a way to dig through all the digital dust and retrieve the video link to Taylor's talk.

Angelica Macklin is a filmmaker and a recent graduate of the Master of Arts in Cultural Studies program at the University of Washington Bothell where she currently coordinates Digital Media Learning Technologies and is affiliate faculty in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Her research interests are in the role media production plays in shaping society and social movements. Angelica is co-director of "Masizakhe: Building Each Other," a film about cultural activists in the Nelson Mandela Metro, South Africa. She is currently working on a new feature documentary that follows the life work of several activists, including Maria Lira and Frei Xico, in the town of Aracuai, Brazil.

End Notes

1 Diana Taylor. 2010. Keynote Address: "Save As… Archiving Memory in the Age of Digital Technologies." Given at the Imagining America 2010 National Conference in Seattle, WA.

2 James Carey. 2009. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society.* Revised Edition. Routledge. New York, NY.

Places, Things, Practices: Diverse Digital Archives and The Curatorial Episteme

by Micah Salkind

In her 2010 address to Imagining America, Dr. Diana Taylor asks that we consider how digital archives can help us better understand the ways technology is modifying our culture's epistemic lens, one that has long been characterized by the documental modes of cultural transmission of the print age as well as the embodied modes that preceded it. Are we, in her words, being moved by digital technologies into a novel "system and subjectivities?"[1]

In Dr. Taylor's work on the Hemispheric Institute's Digital Video Library (HIDVL) Archive at NYU, she models the shaping of a more transparently curatorial epistemic lens, one that I would call an extension of, rather than a departure from, those previously characterized by embodied and documental cultural transmission. In *Save As …,* Taylor asks what is gained or lost by calling various digital repositories, not just HEMI, but sites like YouTube and *Time* Magazine Online, archives. I contend that by expanding our understanding of an archive as one of many diverse places, things, and practices, we can better grapple with the ways that our world views have been reconfigured by the digital.

Bodies performing onscreen and the digitized, textual artifact are experienced quite differently from their live or material analogs. As digital copies, they are no longer characterized by temporal, geographically specific, haptic, olfactory, or other non-aural/visual attributes. In the digital performance archive, such as the HIDVL, copies of performances become virtually indistinguishable through Ctrl+c; even if the lay user is limited in his or her ability to copy a performance, they understand it as being fixed. Text, on the other hand, becomes infinitely variable when scanned or transcribed from material object into digital data.

As the digital closes off certain types of sensorial interactions, both within the physical archive and at the live performance, it opens others. Jill Lane, writing on artist and activist Ricardo Dominguez' work with the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, says that "EDT … has placed the very notion of 'embodiment' under rigorous question, and sought to understand the specific possibilities for constituting *presence* in digital space that is both *collectivized* and *politicized.*"[2] EDT's FloodNet mobilizations require that participants take on some of the risk of the embodied demonstration by manually flooding

corporate servers with individual page requests. The actions take place in online space and in real time.

In Lane's description of FloodNet, she frames the repeated requests launched on the Mexican government's web site for nonexistent pages with names like "justice" and "human rights," as an "on-line memorial to the dead."[3] It is useful to think of this memorial as a digital archive as well. By inscribing its dissatisfaction with the actions of the Mexican government on the very walls of the state's digital home, EDT activists contest its power, disrupting its authority to control its own representation.

While part of FloodNet's efficacy is related to the collectivized, embodied gesture of typing out the URLs, and spreading information about the Mexican government's violent misdeeds, another is related to the indelible records of the protest that, even if wiped from the government servers, remain collectively archived on the various computers used in the action. We might think of this archived constellation of digital graffiti as being distributed and evanescent—it is neither inherently stable nor easily searchable, yet it retains discursive cohesion and mnemonic permanence, an aura.[4]

As Taylor says of the digital artifact, aura doesn't just remain intact or disappear, it becomes mutable, and connected to the "selection process" and distribution of any number of copies.[5] What to make, then, of an entity like WikiLeaks, the non-profit media organization that has since 2006 released torrents of classified diplomatic cables and military secrets to international publics? These infinitesimal and innumerable documents, stored as compressed files on WikiLeaks and nearly 1,500 mirror sites, are made relevant to a wide public only through curation.

Much in the same way that the HIDVL is understood as an archive because it allows for simple, elegant navigation through a selection of performances deemed important to a wide audience, the WikiLeaks archive gains its authority when its materials are arranged for public use. It is not until a document, or a culled selection of documents, is deployed in the service of a news story, political encounter, or offhand interpersonal account of military or government action, that WikiLeaks becomes a fully functioning archive—aura gets attached and detached to it and its contents in any number of discrete human exchanges.[6]

It isn't hard to tell when digital content is uncurated, or circulating without connection to an aura. As Taylor says, online magazine "archives" might retain a record of their print publications as a means to lure web traffic, but not out of a commitment to preserving an historical record. In her critique of *Time* magazine's 2006 Person of the Year (You!), Taylor questions the ways that the digital propensity to forget invites users to dehistoricize their various lived

subjectivities as stylistic choices rather than substantial, embodied differences experienced via diverse relationships with state and corporate power.

The digital you, an individualistic, multi-culti reflection of the magazine reader in the analog world, is untethered to community, place, and a coherent public. Further, it seems to lose more of its connection to context over time; eventually *Time*'s web site obfuscates the relationship between the sexy online "yous" and the mylar reflection on the original magazine entirely. By inviting multi-modal interactions, personal archival projects can augment, rather than delete, our subjectivities, deepening our understandings of "what we know, and how we know it."[7]

"Spring of '17" is a psychogeographic research project I worked on in March through May of 2010.[8] It incorporates a walking tour that knits together stories of downtown Providence, Rhode Island, from the first half of the 20th century, when it was a vaudeville theatre hub, with contemporary recollections of music performed in public as well as private spaces. In addition to hosting the diachronic digital audio tour, broken into six sound walks, the "Spring of '17" web site archives graphic interpretations of historical Sanborn fire maps from 1918 and digitized vaudeville advertisements from the Spring of 1917.

By integrating my own memories of performances in the recent past with historical descriptions of a vaudevillian cultural milieu and cityscape, "Spring of '17" allowed me to place my experience within the context of a geographically specific, local history. In telling stories about space, I became both content creator and curator, using sources legitimized by institutions, passionate digital denizens, and my own lived experience.

Like Taylor, I am not interested in celebrating the utopian or democratic potential of a commercial data dump like YouTube, which, despite its sophisticated content-tracking algorithms, remains uncurated and uncommitted to preservation. Despite this, "Spring of '17" incorporates unstable technologies, and may yet become inoperable if the various hosts decide to close shop, or I mistakenly fail to pay for my server access. What Taylor calls the "fragility" of the digital archive intensifies our sensitivity to what Derrida, elaborating on Freud's notion of a "death drive," described as the anarchic, silent process of destruction burbling alongside every archival project.[9]

While, as Taylor says, quoting Foucault, the belief in the material that underwrites the archive's power as a place from which to speak with authority seems to be maintained through institutional digitization, the digital archive's permanence and stability remain uncertain.[10] Perhaps it is working through the inevitable inoperability and obsolescence of projects like "Spring of '17," and the ultimate failure of the archive to stave off change, that shapes the simultaneous sense of permanence and instability characterizing the digital

episteme. Archives as places, things, and practices give way in the digital epoch to contingencies, and the ambiguities that characterize ever more peripatetic and untethered lives.

We, the "Yous," or the users, must continue cultivating our modes of embodied and documental transmission, those that have helped us ground ourselves in our various local communities, while embracing the possibilities and pitfalls of the deterritorialized digital landscape before us. As our technologies outpace our comprehension of them, we can take comfort in our personal archives, in the ways that we constantly must remake their value and attempt to secure their fidelity. It is in archiving as a daily practice, rather than a rarefied one, that we might truly connect across divides of time and digital placelessness.

Micah Salkind is a Providence, Rhode Island-based writer, curator, DJ, and sound designer. Formerly the Director of Public Programs/Festival Coordinator at The Providence Black Repertory Company, he is pursuing a PhD in American Civilization at Brown University.

End Notes

1 Diana Taylor, "Archiving Memory in the Age of Digital Technologies (SAVE AS…)" Imagining America Keynote Address, 2010.
2 Jill Lane. 2003. "Digital Zapatistas." *TDR / The Drama Review. 47* (2): 131.
3 Ibid. 139
4 Benjamin, Walter. 2000. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.* In Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach, ed. Michael McKeon, 673-695. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
5 Diana Taylor, "Archiving Memory in the Age of Digital Technologies (SAVE AS…)" Imagining America Keynote Address, 2010.
6 See *http://wikileaks.ch/About.html*
7 Ibid.
8 See *http://ripeyams.com/springof1917* last modified in May, 2010.
9 Jacques Derrida. 1995. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression." Diacritics. 25 (2): 52.
10 Diana Taylor, "Archiving Memory in the Age of Digital Technologies (SAVE AS…)" Imagining America Keynote Address, 2010.

Biographical Sketch



Diana Taylor is University Professor and Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish at NYU. She is the author of the award-winning *Theatre of Crisis: Drama and Politics in Latin America* (1991), *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'* (1997), and most recently *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke U.P., 2003), which won the Outstanding Book award from the Association of Theatre in Higher Education, and the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize for Best Book in Latin American and Hispanic Studies from the Modern Language Association. She has two books forthcoming in Spanish (*PERFORMANCE* in Editorial ASUNTOS IMPRESOS, Argentina, and *Acciones de Memoria* coming out with Editorial Metales Pesados, Chile). She has edited over a dozen books, has lectured extensively around the world, and is the recipient of many awards and fellowships, including the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005. She is founding director of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, funded by the Ford, Mellon, Rockefeller, Rockefeller Brothers, and Henry Luce Foundations.

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