

of what archives are, or should be, and establish *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace* as an intriguing and thought-provoking addition to archival literature.

**Heather Dean**  
**Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library**

**Heritage and Social Media: Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture.** ELISA GIACCARDI, ed. New York: Routledge, 2012. xvii, 251 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-61667-6.

*Heritage and Social Media* explores the ways in which social media technologies have reframed our understanding of heritage and shaped our interactions with heritage objects and institutions. Through the lens of participatory culture, editor Elisa Giaccardi brings together twelve studies that reveal changing social practices, the formation of new publics vis-à-vis social media, and the impact of digital technologies on our sense of place. Giaccardi is a professor of interactive media design at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. Her work in the areas of humanities, digital media, and interactive design recently earned her a Delft Technology Fellowship. She is also the forums editor for *Interactions*, a publication of the Association for Computing Machinery. Although not a heritage scholar per se, Giaccardi frequently uses concepts of heritage to look at the impact of social media on society and pays particular attention to its role in meaning making.<sup>1</sup>

The book includes twelve chapters structured around three major themes: social practice, public formation, and sense of place. A prologue by English heritage researcher and policy adviser Graham Fairclough sets the critical tone for the volume by suggesting that participative social technologies have allowed the privileged West to survey the rest of the world's population for both entertainment and study. Fairclough then questions the role of social media in changing the ways in which we think about heritage. He asks whether social media turn our everyday experiences into "heritage" simply because they can now be documented in the digital record like never before. Giaccardi's introduction also raises questions about how our ideas about history and culture have shifted in the aftermath of neoliberalism and identity

1 As a broad concept, "meaning making" refers to the process of constructing social, moral, cognitive, perceptual, and aesthetic meaning from the world around us. Meaning making involves the identification, valuation, and engagement with various forms of information, including media and other communication systems, and rests on the proposition that individual and collective interpretations are often contradictory and contestable. See Wendy Duff, Emily Monks-Leeson, and Alan Galey, "Contexts Built and Found: A Pilot Study on the Process of Archival Meaning-Making," *Archival Science* 12, no. 1 (2012): 69–92.

politics. As well, she ponders the role of personal memory devices in the construction of our selves, our heritage practices, and our sense of place. The following chapters, four representing each major theme, use a case study approach to discuss topics ranging from the curation of our digital selves after death to the creation of digitally mediated places to share memories after natural disasters. Each chapter introduces readers to a novel use of social media and suggests emerging heritage practices that are unique to these technologies. Peter Wright's afterword ends the volume with final thoughts about the issues that are emerging from new heritage practices and challenges readers to consider the implications these practices have on all forms of heritage work.

Contributors to this volume include both emerging and senior scholars across several disciplines concerned with human-computer interaction, memory, and interactive art and design. A quick glance at the authors' home departments – media design, computer science, physics, information technology – would suggest a heavy emphasis on technological expertise. Giaccardi has nevertheless managed a well-balanced representation of case studies from traditional disciplines, such as anthropology, archaeology, and sociology, focused on what contributor Luigina Ciolfi calls the “engineering of computer technology in heritage settings” (p. 69). Each chapter centres on a specific project or heritage practice to consider the intersection of culture and technology. Ciolfi, for example, draws from Nina Simon's notion of the participatory museum and other architects of “new museology” to reflect on the characteristics of four open-ended exhibitions undertaken by the Interaction Design Centre at the University of Limerick. For each exhibition, curators used interactive design to encourage participants to either enrich contextual information about objects in an institution's existing collections or create new heritage objects in the form of recipes, recordings, or annotated photographs. Archivists involved with exhibitions will find these cases inspiring: Ciolfi shows how participatory design is more than just public engagement; it involves constituents in the process of creating and recreating exhibits and, by extension, the museum itself.

In another study, Richard Coyne looks at the proliferation of digital photography and the implications of image- and video-sharing services such as Flickr and YouTube. An architect by training, Coyne is a well-known scholar of digital media design and the philosophy of information technology. His chapter covers much of the same theoretical ground as Joan Schwartz has in her work, which is perhaps more familiar to archival scholars, but Coyne also explores the ways in which the “massification” of photography has shifted our understanding of the medium. Drawing from Walter Benjamin, he suggests that digital technologies provide a platform for the “industrialization” of images and amplifies the “modernist conflation of freedom of expression with free markets and competition” (p. 167). We see this unfolding in the marketing of digital cameras, where slogans like Fujifilm's “Every Picture Matters” and Nikon's “I Am Nikon”

underscore the affective resonance of producing photographs as evidence of ourselves, if only to sell products. As Coyne notes, mass production and consumption of images have also disrupted the distinction between “amateur” and “professional” documentarians. This article reflects the anxiety around heritage workers’ real or perceived loss of authority over collecting practices and curation, which echoes many of the same concerns expressed in archival literature with regard to the changing role of archivists in an increasingly participatory culture. What role do archivists play in the curation of personal records? How do we retain the recognition of our expertise when personal “archiving” has become both technologically feasible and *de rigueur*?

Archivists will be interested in Coyne’s examination of “toxic archives” that are designed to protect and enshrine “secrets.” As he warns, these kinds of archives are risky to keep because they contain information that can potentially destroy the foundation of the very institution they uphold. This might include, for example, the records of Nazi Germany or those kept by tobacco companies that document the health impact of their products. This is familiar territory for archivists, particularly those concerned with historical accountability and access to information. Coyne, however, sets up the concept of “toxic archives” only to call attention to the potential of our personal digital collections to be infiltrated and pilfered by those wanting to profit from such activity. Thus, while he sees some benefit in projects such as WikiLeaks to expose violations of public trust, Coyne is more concerned with how vast archives of personal records can divulge information that was never intended to be shared. The more photographs we share online, for example, the easier it is for a web crawler or bot to monetize a composite of our work and home life. Records of our digital selves can then be fed back to us and our “friends” to sell everything from diet pills to life insurance. Thus, we must learn to balance our desire to leverage commercial technologies to enhance our digital “selves” with the loss of control over our personal information that we give up in exchange for such practices.

Coyne’s study is nicely complemented by Stacy Patsillides, Janis Jefferies, and Martin Conreen’s discussion of the complications that arise when someone dies and leaves behind an active blog, a Flickr or Twitter account, or a Facebook wall. Who takes possession of these “memory objects”? How do the living continue to engage with the dead through technology? For how long do the dead haunt the Internet? In the recent past, death may have been a natural opportunity to reflect on the life of a loved one, to collect and curate their personal records, and, if it seemed appropriate, to seek out an archives interested in acquiring these records. An archivist, in turn, would process the records, arrange and describe them, and make them accessible to researchers. The advent of social media technology disrupts this “natural” process by allowing the digital surrogate to live on. New businesses like LivesOn also make it possible to continue communicating from the grave through social

media. How will archivists contend with these new communication media that allow “conversations” to continue after death? In addition, archivists wanting to preserve digital personal records will have to grapple with questions of ownership of data, which complicates transfer of custody. The storage capacity of the Internet creates another dilemma for archivists and heritage workers. Unlike offline or tangible photographs, digital images take little physical space and can be zipped up in gigabytes of files to be stored on a single hard drive. As a result, photographers are less likely to curate their collections or cull out similar images. Pastillides, Jeffries and Conreen rightly ask, what does it mean to keep everything? Archivists will likely ask, what is the purpose of keeping everything?

Other contributions, including one from the late Roger I. Simon, will encourage archivists to consider the ways in which social media have shifted our understanding of heritage. Whether archivists decide to include GIS data in their descriptions or develop 3D finding aids that virtually “walk” researchers through a collection, the work of archives is increasingly enriched by digital technologies. As Cal Lee has noted in *I, Digital*, the technologies of email, blogs, and digital photographs are changing not only the ways in which we document our lives, but also the ways in which we build and maintain archives. Yet the extent to which we should and will embrace participatory approaches requires further study and analysis. Isto Huvilo’s groundbreaking work on participatory archives calls on archivists to decentralize archival tasks by opening up new opportunities for our constituents to engage with archival work. Social media and participatory culture have, in fact, inspired many of us to build outreach and advocacy programming that attempts to remove or minimize some of the barriers that have prevented the public from participating in the creation and use of archives. As Kate Theimer has argued in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and Our Users*, the participatory approach to building and managing collections not only helps to better contextualize the records in our collection, but also creates an opportunity to radicalize the entire archival process by shifting the nexus of power away from the archivist and outward toward the records creators. Participatory archives, however, are not just about inviting our constituents to engage with archival institutions. That is, if we are truly to embrace what Theimer has called Archives 2.0, then we have to allow the public to create their own archives. For these very reasons, *Heritage and Social Media* is an invaluable tool for archivists. Giaccardi and her contributors provide sobering assessments of the benefits and risks of participatory approaches, and this volume emphasizes that social media have already produced new patterns of social interaction around heritage.

**Rebecka T. Sheffield**  
University of Toronto

## **The Archival Imagination:**

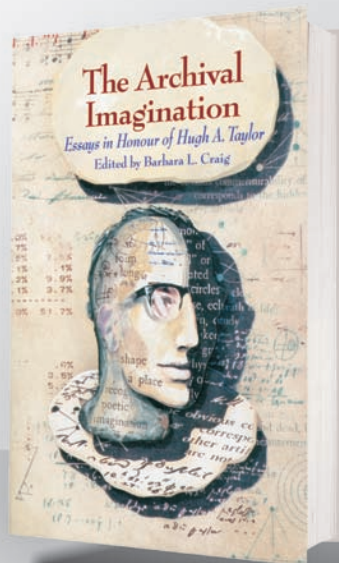
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