

to a traditional or online repository. This may irk archivists and librarians, as well as literalists. Still, this should in no way be read as a critique of the superb critical analyses contained in this collection of cogently argued and carefully written and edited essays, many of which make critical advancements in the broader field of porn studies.

It should be stated that the collection contains essays that may very well challenge the reader. In picking up this volume, one may reasonably expect to read graphic descriptions of sexual activity and to see sexually explicit illustrations. But the reader may not be prepared to read essays on more difficult topics such as bondage and non-consensual sex (the essays of Lisa Downing, Eugenia Brinkema, and Klotz); war porn, that is to say graphic depictions of humiliating acts performed on living, injured, or dead war combatants and filmed for the pleasure of a specific online community (the essays of Ricco and Manuratne); and child pornography (Ruszczky's essay). That being said, these more challenging texts on more difficult subjects are nonetheless critically engaging and persuasively argued, albeit perhaps not directly related to archives and libraries.

Porn Archives ends with an extensive appendix that is sure to be of interest to researchers and scholars in the field of sexuality, as well as to archivists and librarians. Compiled by Caitlin Shanley, the appendix presents an annotated list of repositories around the world that are known to hold important pornographic collections. The 15-page appendix will prove to be an indispensable resource for those wishing to contribute further to the advancement of porn studies, and to the continuing inventory of the porn archive.

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Re-Collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory. RICHARD RINEHART and JON IPPOLITO. Cambridge, MA, and London, UK: MIT Press, 2014. 297 pp. ISBN 978-0-262-02700-7.

Re-Collection is a book about the specific situation of new media art and the preservation challenges that attend it. The intersection between the set of readers interested in new media art and the set that includes the readership of *Archivaria* may, admittedly, be limited; however, *Re-Collection* should be of interest to a broader archival readership for the way it analyzes and frames the threats to the survival of all digital culture. Specifically, the recognition of the material qualities of digital records by a number of recent authors means that “look and feel” is increasingly acknowledged as more than a superficial attribute of records, and examining the

preservation of new media art can be instructive here.¹ In a broader sense, the authors' engagement with the larger problem of the vulnerability of new media as a threat to social or collective memory, as indicated by the book's subtitle, gives this publication a much wider relevance. Unfortunately, the authors' limited grasp of the role and expertise of archivists may prove to be an obstacle to meaningful engagement with an archival readership. Archivists do, arguably, have a role to play in solving the problems outlined in this book – but it will be up to archivists to bridge the gap in understanding and claim their place at the table.

Given the specialized nature of the topic, a few words about terminology may be helpful. The term “new media,” with reference to artwork, is used by the book's authors primarily to denote art in any genre that makes use of digital components. The category of “new media art” may also include, less definitely, other non-traditional forms, such as performance and installation art, which can pose similar challenges to preservation. The frequently used term “variable media,” referring to a similar category of art, implies a philosophy of care and preservation that prioritizes the intellectual and aesthetic essence of a work without being tied to specific physical components, if the latter are subject to technological obsolescence, for example.

The book's co-authors are well known for their work in the field of new media art. Jon Ippolito's reputation as a curator and public speaker was honed during his 15-year tenure as Associate Curator of Media Arts at New York's Guggenheim Museum. Since 2002 he has been a professor of new media at the University of Maine, where he co-founded the Still Water Lab, a centre with the mission “to promote network art and culture.”² Perhaps his best-known project is the Variable Media Questionnaire (1999–), a software tool for gathering metadata to support the long-term care of new media artwork, primarily through extensive interviewing of the artist.³ Richard Rinehart is the Director and Chief Curator of the Samek Art Museum at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and has been active as an instructor, researcher, and writer in the area of new media art. He is also the author of the Media Art Notation System (MANS), an XML-based metadata standard for describing new media

- 1 See, for example, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum et al., “Digital Materiality: Preserving Access to Computers as Complete Environments,” *iPRES 2009: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Preservation of Digital Objects* (Oakland, CA: California Digital Library, 2009), 105–12, accessed 29 December 2015, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7d3465vg>.
- 2 Still Water: What Networks Need to Thrive, “About: Mission,” accessed 29 September 2015, <http://still-water.net>.
- 3 See Forging the Future, “Variable Media Questionnaire,” accessed 30 September 2015, <http://variablemediaquestionnaire.net>.

artworks.⁴ Of significance is the fact that both authors identify themselves on their respective websites as artists, among their other professional roles. The curation and care of new media art, as framed by the authors, seem often to require a high degree of creative intervention and decision-making.

The book is written in a conversational – even chatty – style, with the co-authors taking turns as primary authors of individual chapters and commenting on each other’s writing in marginal text boxes. The presence of two distinct authorial voices helps to underline the collaborative, adaptable approach that is necessary for tackling new media art preservation, and the dearth of one-size-fits-all solutions. The resulting tone is energetic and usually appealing, a quality likely to be helpful in persuading the reader to remain engaged with the authors’ messages despite the daunting state of affairs that attends new media art preservation.

In their introduction, the authors outline four key strategies for preservation: storage, emulation, migration, and reinterpretation. The first of these, storage, is the default approach of traditional institutions that are used to caring for artwork (the same could be said of archives) in relatively stable media, but it is a woefully inadequate method for responding to the challenge of new media. Emulation and migration are familiar to an archival audience as standard digital preservation strategies. In an art context, the potential downsides of migration are highlighted – specifically, the threat to essential aspects of a work’s look and feel that can result from transfer to newer software and hardware. The final strategy, reinterpretation, is identified as a radical approach within the realm of fine art; it amounts to “[sacrificing] basic aspects of the work’s appearance in order to retain the original spirit” (p. 10). This strategy is least controversial when the creator of the work is alive and available to participate in the process of reinterpretation. The concept is borrowed from the performing arts, a context in which the fundamental act of performance involves the reinterpretation of a script or score, and the essence of the work of art is understood to persist outside of these individual performances. In an archival context, the idea of reinterpretation would be fairly radical, at least in considering the custodial role of the archivist. However, the concept of reinterpretation is not new to archival discourse, given contemporary scholarship on oral recordkeeping traditions and efforts to reconcile them with archival practice.⁵

4 Richard Rinehart, “A System of Formal Notation for Scoring Works of Digital and Variable Media Art,” accessed 30 September 2015, <http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sg/emg/library/pdf/rinehart/Rinehart-EMG2004.pdf>.

5 See, for example, Monash University, Faculty of Information Technology, Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics, Research Projects, “Koorie Archiving: Trust and Technology,” the final report of the Australian Research Council Linkage Scheme project

The main body of *Re-Collection* is organized into sections around three provocative propositions that sum up the threats to survival of new media art: death by technology, death by institution, and death by law. Each of these threats can readily be seen to reach well beyond the specific situation of art, forming a useful framework for thinking about the broader cultural and institutional structures that work against the survival of records and archives in new media. In the authors' view, death by technology is perhaps the most easily surmounted of the challenges to new media art preservation, a compounding factor or accomplice to the more insidious cultural threats discussed later in the book. Although the rapid pace of digital obsolescence is mentioned as a problem, the authors also highlight instances when artists employ new media in a spirit of inventiveness, often with full awareness that ephemerality and decay can be intrinsic to new media. Death by institution, in the authors' account, is a consequence of the sometimes intractable core values of institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives. The traditional notion of rarity or uniqueness as a positive attribute of an artifact, for example, works against institutions embracing the important new media preservation strategy of redundant, distributed storage. Traditional museum metadata standards are oriented toward artworks with a single, fixed authorship and date of creation, which may work against successful custody of works for which a variable media approach is indicated. Finally, the chapter on death by law outlines the stifling effects of overzealous application of copyright law. The current legislative environment – particularly in the United States, but increasingly in a global context – works against the kind of copying, resampling, and distribution that the authors see as essential to the organic survival of new media art and digital culture more broadly.

The notion of organic survival of digital culture is a central current of *Re-Collection*. Of the book's two authors, Ippolito in particular takes an ecological view of the possibilities for survival of new media – an ecology that he sees as including the probable death of most cultural creations that are not amenable to change and flux. There is little room for traditional institutions and professionals in this vision. Instead, Ippolito advocates for the role of “unreliable archivists,” citizen creators, collectors and distributors of culture who act out of passion and vocation, and who succeed in perpetuating social memory as part of universal collective activity.⁶ This

Trust and Technology: Building Archival Systems for Indigenous Oral Memory, accessed 30 September 2015, <http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report>.

6 “Unreliable Archivists” is the title of chapter 10; the phrase is borrowed from *The Unreliable Archivist*, a work of art on which Ippolito collaborated with Janet Cohen, Keith Frank, and commissioning curator Steve Dietz (p. 175).

anti-institutional inclination remains in tension with the authors' attempts to provide constructive, actionable advice or suggestions to a readership that is probably largely based in institutions.⁷

The book's concluding chapter is devoted to such advice, portioned out and addressed to each of the various professions that have a role to play in keeping new media art alive. Throughout the book, there are hints that the authors have a limited grasp of the professional role of the archivist, and the final chapter leaves little doubt that this is the case.⁸ Archivists are encouraged to "modernize your metadata" with reference to cataloguing new media works in art museum collections, a function that is normally the domain of registrars or collection management staff. This misunderstanding of archival work represents a lost opportunity to articulate a role for archivists in helping institutions do a better job of sustaining social memory in the area of new media. It is not hard to think of ways that archivists can – and already do – make a contribution in this arena. Within an art museum context, archivists can keep comprehensive records of the installation and reception of new media works, and contribute to institutional conversations around authenticity and documentation. More broadly, archivists can invite participatory approaches and continue to advocate for copyright reform. Ultimately, *Re-Collection* presents a provocative vision of social memory beyond traditional institutional frameworks, but it risks alienating some key allies through its superficial consideration of the roles of professionals.

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- 7 The brief biography on Ippolito's personal website (<http://three.org/ippolito>, accessed 29 September 2015) identifies him as "a footsoldier in the battle between network and hierarchic cultures," perhaps reflecting a similar tension.
- 8 For example, an archivist is characterized as "an omnivorous hunter-gatherer who stockpiles everything related to her subject" (p. 163). More concerning is the authors' apparent unawareness of the contribution of archival scholars in developing the concept of authenticity in a digital context (for example, by the InterPARES Project, <http://www.interpares.org/>). It is simply no longer true that the basic premise of preservation conflates authenticity with originality, as the authors carelessly assert on page 163.