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Speaker Key:

I Interviewer

LM Laurie McNeill

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I It gives me a great pleasure today to introduce Laurie McNeill, a Senior Instructor in the Department of English and Chair of Arts First Year Programmes at the University of British Columbia. I first met her in 2000, at the second IABA gathering, the Landmark Autobiography and Changing Identities conference held at the University of British Columbia. She was dressed in yellow. A yellow t-shirt in fact, because like those wearing red t-shirts here, she was serving as one of the indispensable aids for the conference, registering us, getting us to the right room, helping us with our general confusion, in short serving as one of those very capable managers of the little things. The fragments, the shards, the ephemera that go into the life of a conference. Of course, she was also one of that quadra of remarkable Canadian, and more specifically, UBC graduate students of life writing, who have contributed greatly to our field. But even within that group, she stands out because when it comes to the little things in life writing, what she describes at the folk genres of auto/biography including diaries, ephemera in obituaries, Laurie McNeill is a very big deal. Her contributions have been very, but always, substantial and transforming. Her SA, teaching in all the genres new tricks, the diary of the intranet appeared in biography and inter-disciplinary quarterly in the 2003 special issue, Lives Online, edited by John Zuern. That issue was one of the first major studies of what was going to happen to live writing online, and from the 1st, Laurie's SA has been the most sited contribution to that collection. As of today, on Project News alone, it has been downloaded almost 5,000 times. After that initial [0:01:58 inaudible] into publishing, she turned her attention to a variety of compact forms of life writing in several genres and media. 2005 marked the appearance of writing lives in death, Canadian death notices at auto/biography. 2009, saw brave new genre, or generic colonialism, debates over ancestry in internet diaries, and also, 2.0 blogs and internet diaries. In 2010, she wrote about memory failure, the limits of memorial writing is collective auto/biography, and in 2013, life bites, six word memoire and the exigence of auto tweetographies which appeared in the very influential collection, Identity Technologies, producing online cells edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak.

I want to mention two other contributions that appeared in biography because I am on very firm ground here in terms of engaging reception and influence. Her SA, There is no eye in the network, social networking sites and post human auto biography, appeared in the winter 2012 special issue on post human lives, co-edited by Gillian Whitlock and G Thomas Cowzer, that issue featured essays by Sydney Smith, Julia Watson, Rozanne Kennedy, Lee Gilmore, Cynthia Huff, and a host of other prominent life writing scholars. It won the Council of Editors of Learning Journals award for the best special issue of that year. And from the 1st, Laurie McNeill's essay is the most consulted essay in that collection with over

4,000 downloads in less than five years. The humour, power and eloquence of her essays, when coupled with her ability to anticipate, and then make major contributions to her understanding of shifting trans in life writing online, made her a natural choice to co-edit with John Zuern, our encore special issue, Lives Online 2.0, which appeared in 2015.

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The remarkably [0:04:01 inaudible] and illuminating introduction she and John wrote for that issue has already been downloaded in less than two years on Project News, over 800 times. And like so many of her other essays, it will serve as an introduction, a guide, and a stimulus for future research for many years to come. Her recent work examines the intersection of the digital and the archival in how individuals and communities make meaning of themselves and others in social media. “Rhetorical genre theories have helped me frame questions about access and agency and self-representations and think about how consumers and producers recognise autobiography in its various forms as the way to respond to contemporary cultural situations.” This response includes pedagogy. With Kate Douglas she has recently co-edited a special issue of AB autobiography studies on teaching life rating. Today, she will be talking to us about remediation, repurposing and preservation, network archives of digital lives. Laurie McNeill.

[APPLAUSE]

LM I am not only deeply touched but also a bit stunned by the introduction because Craig had really built it up and this must be the roast of the century, but I feel like I should just go home now, I can’t talk that. Thank you very much, Craig. And I would also like to point out in addition to wearing a yellow shirt at the 2000 conference, I was also wearing pants. I think that’s a little …

[LAUGHTER]

LM Last year the top shelf in the closet of my home office collapsed, raining down boxes of personal effects I had stashed up there and forgotten about. Among the treasures the closet discouraged was my little red diary, a gift I received at the age of 7, and in which in defiance of the page a day structure, I had made sporadic entries for seven years. This diary captured my first formal acts of self-inscription, including an entry from the first year when goaded by the diaries demands with daily updates, I wrote fictitiously, ‘today I broke my leg, it hurt like heck.’ Later offended by my own idiocy I erased this entry, but I can still see the imprint on the page. When you’re in grade 2 you just hold that pen really hard. Later, the diary also captures an angry phase when in grade 4, filled with rage, I cursed out my sister using inventive and daring combinations of every swear word I knew. This in turn was followed by a hilariously biased phase in grade 5, when I wiped it out and replaced these cursed words with what I thought were equally stinging but slightly tamer epithets. Re-

reading this diary that my closet had given back to me was a profound, if no longer profane, in counter with my past. Noting how younger me edited and added in subsequent entries, I saw the work as this diarist as in dialogue with previous representations. Re-shaping what had been written so that it aligned with the current sense of what, or who, I should be in my diary. Now, this little red book preserves these interactions part of my personal archive. I begin with this anecdote because it has helped me to think about some of the compelling issues in digital lives. In particular, my red diary highlights what I see as twin drivers, shaping online autobiographical acts. The anxiety is a production that made me lie just to have something to say, and the anxiety is a preservation that made me re-write my own entries. In my original entries, we see life inscription unfolding in the act of daily living, capturing the immediate urgencies of the situation, and we see the ongoing autobiographical act that comes through my reengagement with past representations.

Finally, in the diary's preservation, we see the archival impulse that a company is the autobiographical one, having written myself, I see that document is valuable, an extension of me that is worth keeping, even as I laugh at its juvenile qualities. In online lives, I see both the individuals and platforms, similarly acknowledging the need to both preserve and interact with the materials of the past as an intracule part of the autobiographical enterprise. In new media's archival turn, to use Caroline Stevens phrase, there is a collective urgency to collect, repurpose and share the artefacts of analogue in digital lives. The archival impulse is a response to contemporary concerns about memory and how we create it in our network lives, about what needs to be documented, about how we balance the right to be forgotten with the need to be remembered. But what should be saved, and how, and who's materials, and for what purposes will they be used? In asking such questions, online autobiographers follow the path already trialed by archivists who themselves push back against the coopting of the term, archive, to describe all acts of preservation and curation.

Today, I would like to think about the digital and archival, the work you're creating, recycling and preserving the stuff of digital lives. Now, what these practices can help us understand about contemporary autobiographical sensibilities, and about contemporary archives. I will look at different sites of autobiographical production that suggest the influence of the archival turn on digital lives. Thinking first of instances of what I see as living archives, questions of reproduction and remediation that reflect main culture, and closing with some thoughts on data shadows, or what autobiography studies might find by reading the intranet against the grain.

I want to begin though by clarifying my terminology because I do recognize the resistance many archivists will have to my use of the term to describe structures and practices that are amateur ad hoc and unstructured. And speaking about social media platforms such as Read-It and Facebook, their website such as Awkward Family photos, I appreciate that these are certainly not archives in a traditional sense, nor are the platforms or producers, archivists or curators as these professional roles have traditionally been understood. And this is just something I saw at the Tate Modern that very nicely captured that conventional idea what a curator does. But I take [0:10:48 inaudible] point that virtual communities do use social media, or the internet more broadly as he says, 'an archive to engage in memory

making', in other words, 'Schold argues, social media service is a site where recorded information important to the communities memory processes is stored and accessed.

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Building on this recognition of the archival functions that serve user's needs, I propose to extend Smith and Watson's concept of everyday autobiography that describes the ordinary acts of self-inscription and performance individuals take on by choice or by force. Considering the ordinary acts of living digitally, I suggest we think about every day archivists, individuals and collectives that respond to a contemporary cultural drive to not only preserve the past but to share it, to make it publicly accessibly, link to a particular person or community, but also open to others to take up and make their own. The everyday archivist partners for social media platforms to select organise and disseminate these documents and personal history, and then consumes comments on, re-post or likes the archival material of others. What is created then? It's a kind of distributed archive rather than centralized one with a focus on documents important to the individual as part of his or her life story, and they take on broader significance through the network.

The archival turn brings with it an awareness of the past as having value or renewed value. This sensibility makes digital user's avid collectors of materials, even those that aren't their own, combing through the vast reaches of the internet to bring back what can be made memorable through its circulation in a new context. Nick Douglas, calls such practices, aggregating, but in autobiography studies we might also think of them as forms of assemblages, Anna Poletti and Gillian Whitlock, and yesterday, Sydney Smith, as well as others call such activities. I know that the work of collecting and sharing, as part of the design of the web, think of the first bloggers who created pages of antedated links, that they thought would be of interest to their audiences, creating archives and progress for these online communities. Indeed, this was the original purpose, imagine for [0:13:17 inaudible], the first link computers designed by scientists working at the Pentagon. Belinda Barnet, provides an important correction to persistent, popularity when she explains that [0:13:31 inaudible] was not, in fact, designed to make sure that military operations could withstand nuclear war. Instead, his goal was, as she says, 'the creation of a scientific archive for Department of Defence customers. A distributed memory.'

Barnet explores the apparent contradiction in this distributed memory, examining the idea that the digital has both a means of permanence and a source of loss. Things get lost in the sheer volume of material, technologies are under formats unreadable, pages shut down. She notes that web use has made users, and she says, 'both pack rats and amnesiacs', a paradox, again she suggests, 'to the one of the heart of [0:14:17 inaudible] archive fever.' Elizabeth [0:14:18 inaudible] analyzing digital post-colonial archives, similarly, observes the close proximity of archival practices and hoarding.

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Writing in 1999, James [0:14:30 inaudible] highlighted a real problem with distributed memory. It made users enable, he suggests, to throw anything away having, 'forgotten that some baggage is better left behind.' I think we might need Marie Condo to come in with our distributed memory. It's not sparking joy Marie. The apparent possibility of keeping everything, I suggest, has created both the anxieties of preservation that underpin contemporary production, but also the possibilities for new assemblages. Everyday archivists see this baggage as an opportunity to contribute to what Guy Hanson calls, 'Social media memory', by preserving and repurposing the materials of their own and other people's lives. As a life narrative scholar, I read this archival acts as autobiographical acts. The archivist shapes an identity through what they find, and how they frame it for circulation, and how it fits in to their larger collection.

Considering digital archives … sorry, considering digital lives, within this culture of hoarding and repurposing and collecting and sharing, I think we can see a shift. And what we might consider as archives or archival practices, and that's a shift from the personal to the public, and from the individual to the collaborative that reflects the practices of network subjects. And the collective frameworks of social networks, the personal archive, the box of old diaries in your own closet yields to Barnet's idea of a distributed archive, or a networked one in which individuals create a shared repository of life narratives. In its most straightforward sense, a living archive is an archive that's still under construction, still taking the contributions are being shaped by these acquisitions. It is living in contrast to a dead or closed archive one to which no texts are added or removed. Applied to digital practices, the concept of a living archive helps describe the networked collaborative and interactive nature of online production and consumption. The real digital archive, Luke Tredneck argues, saturates the entire social network by sharing information we become part of a living archive. [0:16:56 inaudible] notes that digital archives, as he says, increasingly figure as dynamic living systems, constantly transformed and updated, and constantly the object of mergers with new information clusters and programmes. Unlike a traditional archive that gathers materials with a holistic understanding of what the archive is supposed to be saving and why, this living network archive accumulates through collectives acts of storytelling, aggregated and added to by others, much like in a diary the production and the preservation happens simultaneously and without apparent restriction. This is an archive built from the bottom up. In this context, I'm thinking, not a proud source digital archives that compile an array of documents, primarily from the media as well as eyewitness accounts such as those documenting Ferguson, or the sites and pages dedicated to archiving black lives matter. Since these sites document events of public history, they align in many ways with traditional archival functions and subjects, even as the contributors and platforms diverge from these traditions.

Instead, I'm interested in sites in which personal narratives are collected, shared, and preserved often by amateurs engaging with established platforms to participate in collective acts of storytelling that will be preserved for the future. These are instances of networked

auto archives informed by the context of production and predicated in another social act of asserting a life.

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The non-profit project or website, story core, is a leading example of the intersection of the archival and the autobiographical. Story core was established by David [0:18:45 inaudible] in 2003, with the mandate, 'to preserve and share humanity stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just in compassionate world.' Echoing Facebook's original mandate which was, 'Facebook gives people the power to share and makes the world more open and connected. Store core shares the early cooperate enthusiasm for an optimism about public story telling as transformative. At the same time, the site notes, it will create an invaluable archive for future generations. It calls itself, the largest oral history project of its kind, and in the last 14 years it has collective an archive more than 60,000 interviews from more than 100,000 participants.

Participants can be interviewed at story booth location found in San Francisco, Chicago or Atlanta, or in the mobile booth, should it stop in their city or town. Story core have released an App for smart phones that watch users through recording, sharing and necessarily uploading their story to the website. Copies of interviews are kept at the library of congress and are broadcast on national public radios, morning addition, as well as being accessible at the NPR and story core websites. They've also published five themed collections in a book form. The site has a number of initiatives to collect particular kinds of subjects and stories, such as the [0:20:12 inaudible] project which preserves and amplifies the stories of people who have been directly impacted by mass incarceration, and the disability visibility project, both initiatives carried out in partnership with relevant community organisations. Story core legacy brings the project to hospices and hospitals to allow individuals to record interviews of loved ones who are terminally ill. Hilary Savoy, argues that the focus at story core, as well as similar digital media such as, No Place in this American Life, on everyday people and everyday memories, illustrates new media, public memory, in which these sites find a place in public memory for democratizing individual particularities, like providing a framework, platform, and an invitation to share and save the stories of everyday people. Store core structures are a particular form of interactive digital autobiography that is simultaneously a living archive, in which the materials that are collected to transform contemporary consumers, as the mandate says, 'creating a more just and compassionate world' will also be preserved for future ones.

I see similar of less formalized impulses on the emerging Facebook group, Pansuit Nation which creates an unfolding, interactive record of resistance through the life testimonies of group members. The project began in October 2016, by Libby Chamberlain as a secret group for about 30 friends, and Hilary Clinton supporters, who plan to wear pant suits to the polls on election day. Membership grew expansionally overnight, from the original 30 to 24,000 members, each of whom had to be invited by somebody already in the group. That Facebook page now has almost four million members, as for story core, selected

entries were published in a book form in May 2017, and surely, other volumes will follow, and already there is a Pansuit nation colouring book, should you be do [0:22:20 inaudible].

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On the Facebook page, individuals are encouraged to pose personal stories reflecting on why the 2016 election, both as it approached, and in the aftermath of its result, was meaningful to them. And I should say, these are images from the book because it is a secret Facebook page, and feel it was appropriate to take images from the page. The sites agenda explicitly links the power personal narrative, and in particular, collective storytelling to collective action. In their posts, members bear witness to their experiences of marginalization as well resistance and received comments in response. More recently, several members have used the page to announce their candidacy and upcoming mid-term elections. The focus is explicitly on autobiographical content, users are told that they can post personal original impactful stories and photos and they cannot any unoriginal content including links, quotations, petitions, or breaking news. Nor can they share a story or photo of another person who is not giving you permission to do so. With the focus on the immediate needs of community and activism, and after the results, grief, creating an archive was not the aim of this community page, but its home on Facebook, a platform that as I'll discuss a little later on, is deeply in the grips of archive fever, means that by default the Pantsuit Nation is creating an auto archive, a collective account and process. Story core and Pantsuit Nation are, like [0:24:03 inaudible] of New York, auto archival projects that bear the mandates of their founders. David Easy and Libby Chamberlain, set up the conditions for collective acts of storytelling that must be both shared and saved. As the products are particular agents, these auto archives may reproduce some of the qualities of traditional archives, that's because as proto archive archivists, Easy and Chamberlain, select, collect, preserve and produce public and cultural memory that serves particular interests.

I suggest we find a true bottom-up collection of personal narratives on the social media site and news aggregator read it. In particular on the sub-read its, [0:24:48 inaudible] asked me anything, and the more popular ask me anything. Here, as on store core, users are also engaged in creating and preserving interviews that without the same degree of control, or the same pretense, are generating transformative, social goods through this work. Instead, EMAs respond to members curiosity in exhibitionism. The shared sense at Sound Life Experiences, even everyday ones, have value and should be shared. And those who have those experiences have some knowledge that others don't but wish they did. Sometimes it's really hard to see what that knowledge might be as you can see from these topics, but somebody wants to know. [0:25:32 inaudible] propose their own EMA as they see here, and they can also request ones from particular people or types of people. Participants range from the ordinary citizen to the celebrity. Barrack Obama's 2012 EMA brought read it, it's most page views ever with over three million people checking out the site. EMA subjects begin a threat identifying themselves as you see here, so for example, I am a male housekeeper, ask me anything. Like, can you come over and clean my house? Would be a really good thing to ask, I think. And then receive and respond to questions posted by

fellow editors. What I see happening at read-it, primarily though certainly not exclusively on ask me anything, is the co-creation of a living archive. Olly Scholdard used that, and this is his words, ‘In new media environments, communicative acts, for example, submitting a question in an online discussion board, in many instances, also our acts of documenting, the threat is archived and made available after the discussion is concluded.

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Through the digital nature of production, read-it is indeed creating that kind of archive, one that captures not only the finished product, the interview, but the entire collaborative process as well. The crown sourcing of auto archival material that is then taken up in new ways is exemplified by a final living archive site, I will discuss, and that is the parity or humour site, awkward family photos, or AFP. AFP contributes … are pretty good, eh? Contributors laugh at themselves and consumers laugh at everybody else. It started in 2009 by Mike Bender and Doug Churnack, childhood friends who became Hollywood screen writers, and then founders of the site. The site features photo and video submissions that contributors see as suitably awkward. Bender was inspired to start the site after a visit to his childhood home when he was struck by a particularly cringeworthy family portrait his mother had hung on the wall. Bender and Churnack later decided such a phrase was the type that, ‘we all have in our houses.’ They set up the site with some of their own awkward photos and invited readers to send in theirs, and within about a week the site took off. And it now receives submissions from the around the world, and Bender and Churnack work with seven employees to manage the site and its spin-offs, which include a couple of New York Times bestselling books, a travelling museum and a calendar series. There are plans for an AFP themed restaurant, and a new podcast series. I would wash my hands a lot if I went to their restaurant.

Contributors upload their photos giving them a title and providing some back story. The submission page explains the more details, the more likely we are to post. And building this collection Bender and Churnack operate on what they assume was a shared set of laughable, awkward experiences. And indeed, we see the touch stones of contemporary western and primarily American, little class life played out in school photos, holiday snapshots, yearbook images, and family portraits. And I think, Kylie, your work with the remediation of shame is partly what is happening here.

The comic counterparts to easing Chamberlain, Brandon [0:28:58 inaudible] were post secrets Frank Warren, who’s work as a crowd sourcing curator and a Poletti analyzers. Bender and Churnack set up a living archive firmly entranced to what Ryan Milner calls, ‘the logic of lulls.’ Or as Whitney Phillips describes, the detached and associated amusement at others distress. Here of course, the amusement is internalized directed at one’s own distress as well as others. Thinking of this collection as an interactive site of preservation and reproduction, I am interested in the uptake of AFP as a recognised and recurring cultural practice. Now contributors will post, and hash tag their own attempts to create deliberately an awkward family photo, rather than waiting for enough time to pass

that they see the awkwardness in early images. Another phenomenon is the practice of recreating awkward photos and then uploading the results.

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This is giving all of us great ideas for next year's holiday cards. This has become so popular that AFP now has a dedicated category for such reenactments, signaling the popularity of this practice.

I'll just take a moment here, okay.

In the uptake of AFP as a share of reproduce of our cultural activity, we see the hallmarks of main culture. And I'll turn now to some instances of digital lives in which individuals remediate their own archival materials as part of a network practice of engaging the past. In thinking about auto biographical means, I suggest we see templates for meaning making, for cultural scripts if you will, that reflect online culture. Arguably, it's the archival nature of participatory media that makes me culture possible. The distributive memory of the internet, the digital hoarding of our own baggage, preserves and makes accessible the materials of our own in others' lives to be repurposed and new text that reflect individual and collective experiences. The meme, as we know, is an instance of multi-model participatory media, as Ryan Milner describes, in which images, videos, text, and even performances become as he says, aggregate text, collectively creative, circulated and transformed by countless, cultural participants with each [0:31:31 inaudible] constructing a new version. They began on sites such as [0:31:36 inaudible] and read it and often carry with them the imprint of the racism and misogyny that can characterize both sites. But they've gone mainstream, now part of Facebook and Twitter feeds. Whitney Phillips notes, that memes spread, that is they're actively engaged and or remixed into existence because something about a given image, a phrase or a video or whatever, lines up with an already established set of linguistic and cultural norms. Bradley Wiggins and Brett Bowers argue, that memes are artefacts, a participatory digital culture that reflect the social system and its rules for production of these texts. Lamour Shiftman, calls memes forms of postmodern folk law, in which shared norms and values are constructed through artefacts such as photo sharp images or urban legends. In other words, memes work as a shorthand in a particular community, an insider's way of joining the conversations of a group. Those who will understand the intertextual web of illusions, the meme draws upon, and let's speak for the person who creates and circulates it.

Memes draw upon a collective share of history of cultural knowledge. They've implicated a popular culture and recirculated its approach for new purposes. Speaking not of memes in particular, but more broadly a digital media, Marlene Manhaugh argues that this type of cultural literacy predicated on unprecedented digital access to historical and contemporary text is also archival. She calls the ways in which digital media bring the past into the present, a form of archival effects. Thinking about memes, in particular, do this work of making the past part of the present, we could read them as a form of collective/autobiography, one that is unique to digital lives.

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And that complicates ideas about self-inscription and the kinds of archives that might emerge from digital culture. Instead of inscribing an experience, individuals can use a meme to capture the gist of that experience or the response to it in ways that will be recognized by a particular audience, not only for its content, but as an autobiographical assertion that creates an identity. Reaction gifts are one such form, but memes can also have a more explicit autobiographical function as well, for example, as we see here, which is an instance of a described meme image macro. And in these cases, individuals create memetic self-representations, or they ask other people to do them for them, to describe themselves in one word, six words, three fictional characters or whatever. As forms of self-representation, memes are superficial, even on the generic. They typically pair text in someone else's image, film characters, celebrities and ordinary people, all transformed through cyberliberty into star characters. I'm particularly interested in the transformation of real people into a memetic image, and I don't have space to talk about it here, but I'm very interested in the ethical questions that that raises, and happy to take that up in question period.

These composites represent an individual's mood or experience, in ways that play on social conventions, about what the images or words mean, like the structure of a page a day diary, they have taken up a common grammar that makes them recognizable, but that also gives them a template like quality as we see in these examples. This of course, is also the influence of … it's like meme generator that just give you a … they provide the image and you plug your text in above and below. These texts in their play with historical or contemporary materials to reflect an individual response to a situation, suggests auto archival effects to adapt [0:35:34 inaudible] phrase. If we think about digital anxieties of preservation, we might wonder how such artefacts could be preserved, or even if they should be. Indeed, memetic autobiography may be too elusive, too ephemeral, to capture the specific user, but it could create an archive of the collective representations that memes represent. Already archives of reaction gifts exist, and these banks of images may serve those purposes.

In the examples I've shown you, we see memes are drawn and repurpose banks of existing cultural materials for new representative purposes. Other memes build an engineering framework but require individuals to draw on their own pasts in order to participate in the activity. I would call these kinds of memetics self-inscriptions examples of network nostalgia because their practice is routed in, supported by social networks. These activities display social medias archival turn, with the cultivation of a continuous engagement with one's own past in the context of shared autobiographical acts. In network nostalgia, members collaborate with each other, and with social networks, to make meaning of their lives and experiences through sharing and returning to them. The collective and aggregate quality of these collaborations reflect both archival and memetic frameworks for this making.

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As with living archives, autobiographical memes provide both an invitation and an urgency to revisit the past, to bring it into the present. Of course, the past sells the moments individuals choose or as in any autobiographical representation, selective. This is curated autobiographical and archival footage, limited typically to a visual or textual snapshot, a nostalgic nod that informs and is informed by the contemporary.

A very popular instance of an auto memetic act is throwback Thursday, with participants on social … Yes, I went there. Participants on social media sites hash tagging images, documents or videos, both digital and digitized to represent some aspect or experience of their pasts. Throwbacks exemplify the ways that social media are now premised on the continual co-presence of the past in our network lives. Users frame these materials for the new context of consumption, explaining what's happening and with whom, and offering some reflects of commentary that often cultivates an ironic distance between the narrating and narrated eyes to use Smith and Watson's terminology.

In throwback posts, we see the practice of auto archiving in response to a network norm, memetic template for sharing. What individuals select to share and when represents their autobiographical representation in the moment of posting and shaped by norms for the throwback meme. They're typically lighthearted or warmly nostalgic rather confessional or traumatic. Nothing too embarrassing in a compromising in keeping with memetic cultures logic of lulls. Certainly, throwbacks can be entirely strategic self-representations, slide forms of humble bragging that can remind current networks of one's past glories or pointed ways of distancing oneself from a past self or life that they still recognize but no longer identify with or as. And just anecdotally, I've seen some really interesting use of throwbacks in trans communities in which individuals post photos of themselves between transition alongside their current image.

They cultivate an autobiographical throughline connecting then and now. They are one way to account for ourselves, or digital selves inscribe moment by moment stabilizing that iterative autobiography with reference to the past. The success of autobiographical memes such as throwbacks may be linked to an earlier memetic instance, the random 25 things you didn't know about me list that exploded on Facebook in 2008 and 2009, and that Facebook took credit for producing even though similar lists circulated by email in the 1990s on blogs in 2006, and in a 16 item version on Facebook itself in 2008. Those who completed the 25 things list then tagged up to 10 friends because according to the memes rule book, if I tagged you it's because I want to know more about you. Facebook and other social media sites continue to cultivate these paths of aggressive/coercive acts of network like narrative that entice members to post personal images and content, and often tag other members too, multiplying the impact of the post. Two recent lists include the ten albums that influence me as a team, and ten concerts I had been two, and one is a lie, with this last example doing some interesting work with the performance of autobiographical authenticity testing ones network on the knowledge of the list maker and work or the tastes.

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These lists extend the performance of a self as a cultural consumer, work that used to be done by the profiles genre, and that needed to be taken up in a more dynamic way as the network and its choosers have evolved. These memetic autobiographies clearly meet contemporary cultural needs, supporting Wiggins and Bowers argument that memes are genres. They are recognizable responses to recurring situations as rhetorical genre theorists would say. But as Carl [0:41:23 inaudible] and Tess [0:41:23 inaudible] remind us, genres persist because they serve someone's or something's interests. Facebook creates and responds to cultural anxieties about production and preservation, and the monetizes our engagement with the past because it fosters the production of original content, the tagging of friends, individuals responding to guests, which of the concerts was a lie, and those are the things that networks need for data mining purposes.

Autobiographical memes are big business for social networks when 25 things went viral on Facebook it brought a 60% increase over one month alone in the creation of new profiles. Five million responses recreated in just one week in January in 2009. This uptake in traffic allowed Facebook to beat rival My Space to become the top networking site, a position it's maintained. [0:42:20 inaudible] by the success, Facebook has made a concerted effort to redesign the platform as an archival hub, the place for storing and accessing data such as our photos, but also our daily inscriptions of life. This focus on preservation and repurposing the past has become a hallmark of this particular platform, much more so than on rival and subsidiary sites such as Twitter, Tumbla and Instagram. The 2011 launch of Timeline, the updated and expanded profile, exemplifies this new archival mindset. Mark Zuckerberg noted that timeline was necessary because the old interface had failed to preserve the efforts of, he said, 'millions and millions of people who have spent years curating the stories of their lives, but who's stories and photos were being lost in the deluge of new posts.' Facebook has continued to introduce features and apps that cultivate user engagement with their past content and experiences. In the last three years it has launched a regular series of algorithmic interventions, including the year review videos to celebrate your friendship posts and on this day memories. In all of these cases, Facebook minds past post for what it sees as important content, often content that had the most networked activities such as likes and comments, and then invites users to share these projects, products. Typically, as with throwbacks, members add a comment when they share these materials, and the new posts can get more response for the network providing the site with yet more personal data. From the platform's perspective, the point of all of this nostalgia is to get users to interact more with the site and with each other. But give the very white, American male, middle class subjectivities that are encoded literally in the design of social media platforms, we might well want to consider what and whom that nostalgia will represent, and who's interest it will serve.

0:44:21

In Facebook's overwhelming influence, it's 1.94 billion member and counting, it's version of the network archive takes on a formative role in shaping digital archival memory establishing it, like traditional archives, as a source of knowledge and power, essential for social and personal identity as Schwarzenegger described.

So far we've looked at autobiographical production and preservation that is deliberate with individuals or collectives making choices to gather and share materials that create aggregate self-representations. But what about the autobiographical traces we leave behind in the course of just living our digital lives? I would like to close by thinking of a final intersection of the autobiographical and the archival that digital technologies present, and that is the concept of data shadows. Data shadows are the metadated generated each time we use digital technology, sending an email, making a call on our mobile phones or Tweeting, for example. Amelia Acher notes that typically we sign away our rights to this metadata when we agree to a provides terms of service, and the question of who controls this metadata remains heated. [0:45:39 inaudible] an archivist approaches the topic of data shadows through questions of preservation, should archivists try to capture this metadata? Without it, she argues, the records of digital interactions will be incomplete. For every Tweet we send for example, the platform also captures data about the device used to send it, the type of App, the users geo location, the Tweets interactive impact and so on. In other words, with each interaction we're leaving traces of ourselves, shards as we talked about yesterday. I think we could consider and capture such traces through an autobiographical framework as personal data shadows, or as Paul Arthur calls them, our data portraits. Certainly, as Madeline [0:46:25 inaudible] and John Kitsman have each observed, we're creating vast archives of such personal data through our participation and qualified self-type projects, or even by uploading our Fitbit. Life streaming is another extreme example of a data rich living archive.

But here I'm also thinking about expanding this idea of metadata, to include other forms of archival and autobiographical shadows who Warren Harris calls in another context, 'archival slivers', the traces our identities we leave behind as actors in digital networks. In his essay of things said, and unsaid, power archival silences and power in silence. Rodney Carter, our archivists, needs to adopt the feminist literary studies and methodology of listening to silences or reading archive against the grain in order to find voices that had been unnaturally silenced in traditional archives. Similarly, in the living archive of the internet, we can look for the autobiographical moments, they're happening outside the typical places where we expect to find them. Ollie Scholds research on archive gaming threads on Read It reveals one place in which we find such personal data shadows. His analysis of gamers posts reveals how individuals frame their commentary about a particular game through autobiographical narrative about their experiences in playing it.

We also see this kind of autobiographical trace in Nicole and Josh Matthews work with personal accounts and online reviews of hearing aids, as we talked about yesterday.

0:48:01

On the social media platform, Pinterest, I see autobiographical shadows in the personalized commentary that users attach to materials they pin, and that then continues to circulate, divorced from the original source. For example, the comments, as we see here, this would be so cute to wear to church or on a date with hubby.' Or, 'I need to do this in our closet, it would make our medicine take up so much less space.' In this, now anonymized comments, we see how the user repurposed the generic material of the pin, cloning a home organisation or travel pictures, to make an autobiographical statement. That is then taken up by other users who no longer know the significance and may not even notice it or may choose to dismiss it if they don't hold the same perspectives as the original commentator. Such anonymous repurposing, again, is memetic, but in the context of this social media site, it's also an auto archival trace, an ephemeral assertion of an eye who was there.

Tim Highfield and Tammer Lever, in their analysis of Instagram ultrasound in funeral posts, those are two different things, not the same, point out the methodological challenges of this kind of research in the shadows. For one, they know the type of web scraping required to find this data can contravene a platforms terms of service. I recognize too that not everything online is meant to be preserved. [0:49:36 inaudible] and Shapchat are two very popular platforms that reject preservation almost entirely, but I think autobiography studies, reading against the grain, could productively consider these types of incidental self-representations that, like me and my grade two diary, make their own spaces to inscribe and preserve themselves. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

I [0:50:11 inaudible] and Clare, if you can be the overriding timekeeper as to when we need [0:50:17 inaudible].

V1 Thank you so much. On the interests of the different kinds of [0:50:36 inaudible] that you're talking about. One of the questions that is probably [0:50:42 inaudible] digital story to [0:50:46 inaudible] is, what the qualities of navigation, and particularly in some of the [0:50:51 inaudible] and finding your way through these, perhaps the less [0:51:09 inaudible] that have a politically depressive [0:51:21 inaudible], and yet the routes you might find your way through them [0:51:29 inaudible] in terms of focusing [0:51:34 inaudible]. I fail to find any [0:51:35 inaudible], and I would just love it if you could tell me [0:51:41 inaudible].

LM There is no scholarly work on it. I think this is actually where I find archival studies very helpful because in their conversations about writing descriptions and in developing digital archives that are accessible, how do you enable that kind of navigation? But also, archival studies relatively recently begun to grapple in a public way about the fact that those choices are political but they're not neutral despite assumptions about the archive is this neutral

body in archivists is just … the caretakers of information. So, I think we can draw on that kind of scholarship. There's a little bit of work on hash tagging, but there's very little to think about the design of these platforms and how we encounter materials … do we encounter them in a serial kind of way. Ivan Rosak has done a really … [0:52:47 inaudible] paper has done some really interesting work with a paired series of … two paired projects. One was, this man's living archive, and he was like a live streamer, and he donated his archive, and then this art group, art collective, made a project out of his living archive called, 'constant', and they have designed it to be totally frustrating in the ways you access it, in that nothing ever leads to something where you think it's going to go. You end up having this rabbit hole type of experience, and that … and so, Rosak's explorations of what that means begin to touch on those considerations, although he's very fond of the idea that you never get anywhere, and that's because is in our project versus us trying to find a composite series of examples about this kind of representation. Thank you for the question.

0:53:43

V2 Thanks. I have a question about something that started to come to me as [0:54:14 inaudible] especially the part on the beings and to repurposing than to [0:54:23 inaudible] has the concept of context collapse in digital environments. And it's interesting to think about the way in which self-inscription becomes potentially deep textualized that is with this question about, what's the depth of the past? How deep it is that can actually be passed or is it a … an effect of the platform that there's this effect of depth passed without the past, without context. And what does that mean, or how [0:55:13 inaudible] things like identity and … I don't know.

LM I thought that you were going to keep going. I was hoping you were going to keep going.

V2 It's thinking about, is the context required for self-inscription? Or, does it hang in some kind of platform?

LM Or, is new context created in the new use? So, I think we might, here, really think about the original context of production which gets, in some cases, lost, or reimagined in the act of remembering that you posted throwback, you acknowledged the original context. But you're repurposing it in this kind of way, in things like the memes or the data shadows, there is no context, except the one you're creating in the instance of sharing. So, I don't know if that touches on the effect of the depths of the past. I have to think about that a little bit more, but it also might be that, that's not as relevant for these kinds of interactions. These are not …these are conversational in some aspects rather than reflective.

0:56:41

V3 Thank you. I wonder if you could talk a little bit in terms of practices of unfreedom of practices of [0:56:59 inaudible] as they isolate the space that you're describing. And I was particularly interested in [0:57:06 inaudible] nation explain, and how that opened as one to this kind of instability of who's being naive, and who's not being naive in the [0:57:16 inaudible] of those particular simple [0:57:22 inaudible] in your narrative [0:57:24 inaudible] so that when people are posting, they will believe that they were participating in a democratic community, and it would be built in the run up to the election.

LM Yeah.

V3 What those people discovered is that, that curator was given a [0:57:41 inaudible] book from what she benefited. So, the first thing, who was naive and who wasn't naive, and what are the politics of leading that, and the visibility of that. Is there a similar way that you understand that possibly in terms of practices and [0:58:04 inaudible]?

LM Hmm. I'm not sure I would have used the terms, 'freedom and unfreedom', so let me just see if I can tease that out. I think pantsinations is a good example of the problematics of these kinds of archives. And I would say story core or humans of New York are similar in the ways that they've set up a framework that seems to be open and democratic, but they have a very particular mission. And pansination was so interesting in the ways that people then, unlike our store core where it would just be erased because it's a final product type site. Those debates happened on Facebook. I didn't go looking for them. I don't know if they're archived in the same way, you probably could go back through and look for them, so at least it happened in public. A big group left, our participants left, people called out Chamberlain for that kind of practice, but ultimately it's her show, even though it's a nation, it's really her nation and in the same way that [0:59:17 inaudible] are really controlling the sets of experiences that they want to hear about. I'm not sure if I'm addressing your thinking, but am I getting any aspect of it?

V3 You're [0:59:33 inaudible] in Seattle for showcasing the ironies …

LM Yes.

V3 [0:59:39 inaudible] so when you say, 'it's her show', no one who joined that group knew that or believed that at the moment that they were joining.

LM Right.

0:59:50

V3 And [0:59:52 inaudible] and yet she gets to [0:59:55 inaudible] and say something like, ‘what did you think you were doing?’ So, I just thinking, if there are terms other than naive [1:00:01 inaudible] that help us think through some of the things [1:00:08 inaudible] are much more complicated. [1:00:11 inaudible] participation looks like if something happened. It looks like democracy.

LM Right.

V3 It doesn’t operate like it.

LM This is always what happens … this was the promise of the worldwide web was it was going to be democratic, and instead it ended up being individual people who had the power to make spaces work. Read it, possibly, would be one way to think about something else, but Read it has a whole series of politics that also need to be considered. I think probably we need to think about success in that instance. If Pantsuit nation had not gone from 30 members to 24,000 overnight, and it had just been the little group of 30, it could have maintained that more democratic sense of, we’re all in this together. But it became so successful, so quickly, that it opened up opportunities for Chamberlain to think in different kinds of ways about it that were more individualistic than collective.

I Anymore? Okay then, thank you.