

1) Outline of topic – general relevance

Under the headline *The Archive in Motion* we propose a research project that will investigate the ways in which archival concepts and practices have been transformed under the impact of the radical changes in writing and recording technologies that have taken place over the last century, and particularly with the introduction of digital technologies. Film, video, television, sound recording and computers seem to have instigated a general storage-mania and a proliferation of both public and private archival practices. Yet these technologies also challenge traditional notions of the permanence and stability of the archival document and open onto a whole range of new questions concerning what exactly it means to store information for future use. This project studies what happens when an older storage practice encounters a new media culture based on permanent transfer and immediate access.

2) General background: The archive, new media and collective memory

The four intertwined pillars of the classical archive are storage, preservation, classification and access. Fundamentally, the archival practices that evolved alongside modern state formations transform time into a set of spatial orders. Storage deals with protecting the archival objects from the wear and tear of time. Preservation and restoration are the activities of so-called active storage, protection and reparations due to the damages of time. Classification, which very often is combined with research, is a way of organizing large collections according to transhistorical categories. And, finally, accessibility and searchability, which always involve the development of some kind of interface (and which may even extend to research-based exhibitions of archival materials), relate any past document to the present of a here and now.

Significantly, all these aspects of archival practices change as the documents to be *saved* are themselves fundamentally transformed due to changes in the technological and communicational structure of society. This situation is addressed head-on in the title of this project. The idea of an archive *in motion* is a paradox: the archive is traditionally that which arrests time, which stops all motion. For 19th century historians, the archive was in its essence an institution that made it possible to access “frozen” sections of past time. The archive, in this sense, cannot be *in motion* or produce motion. But the technological developments in the 20th Century have inevitable forced the archive to confront the question of mobility, both practically and conceptually. Technically, it could be said that the archive *of motion* was introduced during the late 19th Century with the scientific urge to store and analyze temporal phenomena that culminated with the introduction of the phonograph and film in the late 19th C (see Ernst 2010 and Spieker 2006). The transition from an archive *of motion* to the notion of an archive *in motion* is associated with the advent of computer technologies and ultimately, the Internet, where constant transfer and updating functions as well as “live” communication and interaction redefine the

temporality of the archival document itself. If the archive itself is set *in motion* in the age of digitization, it compels us to take a closer look at the nature of this motion, its background and genesis and to ask what kind of challenges it poses in relation to archival practices.

Two major international tendencies testify to the contemporary effort to cope with this issue. On the one hand, there is the global transformation of archives and libraries due to the impact of new technologies. And on the other hand, we see the emergence of an “archival turn” in artistic production as well as in a number of humanistic disciplines.

Archives and libraries all around the world struggle to navigate between radical technological shifts and the gradual extinction of older media. The member institutions of the largest archive and library federations, IFLA and FIAF, have launched several initiatives to investigate the challenges of our cultural heritage in a digital age. In this context, the National Library of Norway is a pioneering institution: in 1989 Norway adopted one of the most radical legal deposit acts in the world, stating that all publicly available cultural (audiovisual and textual) content should be deposited in the archives of the National Library *regardless of medium*. Before 1989, the legal deposit act basically covered only printed materials like books, newspapers and pamphlets; today it also covers music, photographs, films and websites. Furthermore, all major Norwegian archives are urged to make their materials accessible on the Internet, which has led the National Library of Norway to launch an ambitious program that involves digitizing its collections in their entirety, independent of the original media. This research project is launched as part of the National Library of Norway’s initiative to produce systematic reflection on its own practices and the wider cultural and social transformations that spur them.

Alongside these changes in archival practice at various institutional levels, the recent decade have seen a host of exhibitions, art projects, publications and conferences devoted to the concept of the archive. Ambitious exhibition projects such as *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving* (P.S.1, New York, 1998), *Universal Archive* (MACBA, Barcelona 2008) and *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (ICP, New York, 2008) investigated issues such as the ongoing digitization of the archive, the resulting loss of “physical location” and contemporary art’s obsession with collections of objects, images and artifacts. Readers such as *The Archive* (Merewether, 2006) and *InterArchive* (Bismarck et al, 2002) have attracted wide attention, in tandem with a host of more specialized archival studies (Brügger 2005, Spieker 2006, Foster 2004, Ernst 2005, Doane 2002). Members of the AiM project team have also been involved in organizing the international conference “The Archive in Motion” at the National Library in Norway in 2008.

This widespread reflection on archival practices is often addressed in terms of a cultural transition from the analogue to the digital. While we do not disagree with the significance of this transition, we are wary of the technological determinism that may all too easily come to inform such accounts. The “archive in motion” cannot simply be studied as a product of new technologies, as if such technologies were neutral givens. What interests us is, rather, how a shift towards a mobilization of archival practices takes place across a number of different technical inventions and platforms whose privileged features emerge and evolve with this shift rather than simply producing it. For this reason we want to investigate aspects of this transition from an archeological perspective that

traces the way in which phenomena and practices associated with pre-digital technologies may inform our understanding of our current digital practices. We hope, in short, to be able to assess and describe the transversal genealogies at play in the current questioning of the archive – rather than departing from a linear history of the archive’s development from relative stasis to radical mobility.

3) *Theoretical/methodological approaches and research questions*

The project relies on *three research perspectives* that we believe may co-inform each other in a fruitful way: *First*, the heterogeneous field named “social memory studies” and, *second*, a media archaeological approach that studies the archival aspect of new media technologies in Michel Foucault’s sense of the term (i.e. as the distinct, if fragmentary, material instances of a given historical order). *Third*, we draw on the emerging field named “media aesthetics”, which focuses on how media change is related to changing conditions of human perception and sensation.

Generally speaking, social memory studies are devoted to the “social frameworks of memory” (Halbwachs, 1980) and originate in Emile Durkheim’s study of the construction of social memory through rituals and traditions (Durkheim, 1990): ultimately, the aim of this approach was to give a social account of *temporality* (Olick and Robbins 1998). In premodern societies, social memory is stabilized through songs and rituals that serve to maintain a degree of continuity and transfer of knowledge between generations (Durkheim 1990, Halbwachs 1980, Connerton 1989, Misztal 2003). In modern societies, social memory is increasingly technologically mediated. Since the advent of writing, memory is stored outside of man and with every major media-technological invention, a crisis of social memory is felt as the past changes shape. In recent years, social memory studies have included the modern mass media in their discussions of the material means of memory transmission. This has opened up a shift within social memory studies from the notion of the social construction of memory as technologically unmediated to an interest in social memory as mediated through a series of increasingly complex technological loci. To study recent changes in archival practice and its way of “handling time” is then to study changes in the structuring of social memory that touches on the very basis of our current collective formations as well as the general sense of “what we are doing together”.

In extension of this, we want to study in more detail the interaction between particular changes in social memory structures and particular technological changes or ruptures. For this purpose, the much-discussed “big rupture” between analogue and digital technology is too broad or imprecise to give a meaningful framework for research. Instead, a media archeological approach (Ernst 2002 and 2006, Kittler 1999, Foucault 1969) should make it possible to study a heterogeneous set of archival features, issues and dilemmas broadly associated with digital culture in terms of their emergence within a range of different pre-digital technological scenarios. Because such technologies also engage human perception, sensation and memory in very different ways, a media aesthetic perspective may be an important component in the effort to account for such archival features with the necessary degree of precision.

We believe that the integration of these three perspectives is best realized through the study of a series of precisely delimited empirical cases where the modern archive seems to reflect upon itself – *i.e. cases where archival practices meet with critical*

challenges that seem to provoke an intensive activity of archival self-reflection in one form or another. Such self-reflection can take place within a number of different scenarios. In many cases they appear in connection with the invention of new archival modes or forms that speak of the difficulties that has to be handled through their very selection of salient technological features and modes of usage. Other cases appear within the rich body of artistic productions that turn around archival issues and whose methodological strategies and impact far exceed the purely aesthetic or “artistic”. This last type of cases may be instructive due to the fact that many modern artworks tend to actively “defamiliarize” technology, reintroducing forms of awareness or knowledge that are often lost or neutralized in everyday use. Our final choice of cases is based on our desire to produce comparative perspectives on the three major sets of modern media technologies that seem particularly important in relation to the concept and practices of the archive in motion: 1) film and photography, 2) video and teletechnologies, and 3) computers and algorithmic technologies. Based on the series of case studies we have singled out, our project will focus on the following set of questions:

- In what way did film and photography, in their different ways, contribute to an archival inscription of life forms?

- How do these forms of inscription contribute to, or differ from, the archiving of life forms that we see in today’s biometric practices or in the networking practices of so-called “social media”?

- What concepts and practices of social memory have been activated in the archival shift from storage culture to transfer culture?

- What conceptions of the interaction between human perception, technology and memory have been at play in this shift?

- In what ways have the mobilization of the archive transformed the character and status of the archival document and its various user functions?

Case A: Albert Kahn’s ‘Archives of the Planet’ and the technical inscription of life forms. The French Jewish Banker Albert Kahn (1860-1940) created “les Archives de la planète” between 1912 and 1932 to make an “inventory of the surface of the globe inhabited and developed by man as it presents itself at the start of the 20th Century...” He financed cameramen traveling to more than 50 countries, and the collection comprises 72 000 autochromes (a new color photography process on glass plates invented by Louis Lumière in 1907), 183 000 meters of film (over one hundred hours of projection) and 4000 stereographs. The Archives of the Planet is an outstanding case for the study of archival self-reflexivity, since Kahn set out not to collect existing films and footage, as is the case with almost all other film archives, but to chart social life forms through the means of film and color photography. This means that his documents were from the outset created according to a distinct set of archival principles and theories. Kahn advocated a ‘scientific’ approach that turned out to be a powerful principle for organizing

the representation of the crowd and its relation to the single individual: here, the adaptation of the archive as a new form of social memory explicitly emerges as a form of management of social life. The undertaking is embedded in the globalizing movements and technologies of the early 20th Century and coincides in significant ways with the social technologies underpinning the (then) new discipline of cultural geography and its specific management of life forms

As a case, The Archives of the Planet open up questions concerning two important junctures in the development of modern archival techniques. The breakthrough of film and time-based media in the late 19th Century secured that events could be archived as moving images – a development that brought with it a new set of divisions between the visible and the written, i.e. between the archival image-document and the word-based document. The second major shift – the implementation of digital technologies - is still in a process of formation and is currently being applied to the Kahn collection. At a time when the theoretical consequences of the configuration between photochemical images and digital files are still being worked out, an archeological and theoretical investigation of this second process of transformation is particularly important. The technical media used by Kahn to chart a 'mode of life' entail other concepts of the crowd, of reception and of social memory than those often associated with digital media. This study aims to approach the present changes in social memory and archival techniques in the light of the archival mobilization that pertain to the Kahn archive in order to see how they may deepen our understanding of the contemporary management of life.

Case B: The Networked Document

This case contributes to the global effort to assess the challenge of archiving the processes and features of social websites by looking at the networking aspects of YouTube, the most important global platform for sharing audiovisual content on the web (Burgess and Green 2009). At the present moment, pioneering archives such as the National Library of Norway and INA (Institut national de l'audiovisuel, Paris) urgently try to find ways to preserve the user experience of today's online archives for future generations (Durgeon and Trelani 2010, Lowood 2010, Oomer 2010, Skarstein 2010). This archival desire is important because any online archive may be shut down anytime, just like the popular forerunner to YouTube, GeoCity. The radical dynamization of the context around audiovisual content published on social websites brings about a mobilization of the meaning and value of this content, as well as of the status of the archival document itself. The document is no longer an isolated text, image or video. Its qualities reside instead in the dynamic and reciprocal grinding of influences between several user-generated media-types upon another within an active GUI (graphical user interface). This dynamic constitutes the *networked* document. This project will study the networked document by tracing the destiny of four very influential "signatures" on YouTube, two Norwegian and two American: *Lassegg* and *voe*, and *Boxxy* and *Know your Meme*. These signatures will be investigated as phenomena that in different ways illustrate and reflect upon the dynamics of an online archive: the copycat phenomenon or "traveling styles" (*Lassegg*), YouTube's folksonomy or chains of commentaries, tags and new images (*voe*), a fandom archive where a "dead" blogger is preserved and kept alive in odd ways (*Boxxy*), and the electronic hyper-reflexivity represented by a community of satirists "documenting the Internet" through YouTube (*Know your Meme*). With each

example, this study will investigate how the document “becomes networked” through the interaction of the participatory efforts of a community of users and in what way these extended documents may be said to function as artificial memory sites. The general hypothesis is that this “becoming networked” constitutes a distinct new archival user experience. However, in order to get a media archeological perspective on this transformation of the archival document and its uses, the YouTube examples will be viewed in light of a pre-digital networked document “community”. With the so-called mail art phenomenon of the 1960s and 70’s, artists foregrounded the pragmatics of communication by turning the presentational medium of art into an exchange medium using the postal system. In this process, the personal letter was turned into a multimodal dispatch with multiple signatures and destinations that overturned the sender-receiver dynamic of a memory technology that extends from letters and diaries to the modern novel. The elaboration of the theoretical and empirical questions raised by this case study will take place in close dialogue with the ICT-experts at the National Library of Norway currently working to invent frameworks for archiving the contemporary user experience of the networked document. This collaborative effort will experimentally test the possibilities of presenting an archive in motion by archiving a selection of the networked documents analyzed in this project, as authentically as possible within the database architecture of the National Library of Norway.

Case C: Videosociality and the new concept of social memory.

In the 1960’s, the question of the relation between artistic and archival practices reached a new level of intensity as two different concepts of archival mobilization rub up against each other. Under the influence of new media technologies, artists invested in the political/aesthetic forms of action characteristic of the 20th century avant-garde movements had long used archival forms or technologies in ways that seemed to challenge the 19th century reliance on the stability of the historical “moments” guarded by the public archives. These instances of archival mobilization turned around a number of different issues, such as the growing bureaucratization of Western societies, the relation between historiography and power, questions of self-archiving and self-surveillance and the preoccupation with the problem of storage in modern archive culture (the question of “information overload” and its consequences for the status and accessibility of the single document). However, this case will investigate the hypotheses that the postwar introduction of broadcasting and the subsequent artistic appropriation of video technologies produced a wholly new mode of archival imagination. Artists explicitly saw video and TV as technologies that opened for both a rethinking and re-engineering of social relations. Predictably, a number of works focused on a critique or subversion of the official uses of TV as the ideological instrument of state apparatuses and/or commercial interests, but a closer study of the discursive field of early video art reveals a very different emphasis. The intensive exploration of video turns around the fact that it seemed to represent a new form of social memory: Its social power (and hence the social power of all the real-time technologies that followed in its wake) was related to the fact that its live and “unstable” flow of signals and the various problems related to the handling of this flow seemed to replicate the dynamic time crystallization processes of the human mind itself. Hence, video was approached as the key technology of the new focus on the “collaboration of brains” and “exploitation of brainpower” characteristic of the

information age. In the writing and works of the Radical Software Group and numerous other artists associated with the early video scene (such as Aldo Tambellini, Antoni Muntadas, Keith Sonnier, Lynda Benglis) video instigates a reflexive approach to social memory that radically emphasizes *the live processing of experiences* and that seems to take inspiration from Henri Bergson's notion of human memory as a processing of the past and an apprehension of the future within the constant flux of a now. *Early video art then comes across as a site where the question of storage culture confronts a new transfer culture, its constructive or utopian dimensions as well as its new forms of control.* It is a site where real-time feedback processes introduces a form of instantaneous or radically mobilized social reflexivity that is ultimately oriented towards a futuristic re-definition of the very question of "social relation". To study early video art from an archival perspective is then to see it as a pioneer site for the archival issues that confront common culture on a large scale today.

Case D: The Biometric Passport

Passports document our identities and our nationalities. They also record our travels across borders (in some instances, within borders). As a record of our identities, nationalities, and travel, passports function both practically and symbolically.

Historically, for the system of passports (including tourist and working visas, identity cards, diplomatic passports, etc.) to work internationally, the passport needed to be made inviolable—and, with time, more and more refinements engineered to forestall forgeries and fakes were introduced: color photographs (United States, 1958), perforated passport covers (United States, 1961), and digital photographs (Japan, 1992). With each of these new debates, material and symbolic costs and risks have been weighed. In December 2004 the European Union called for regulating standards for security features and biometrics in its passports. In the aftermath of 9/11, technological enhancements are redefining the passport's look and feel. Embedding biological information, retinal scans, DNA, fingerprints, and so on will be introduced in varying ways by different countries (fingerprints in Norway by March 1, 2010) - but as these technologies make information at once available to machines and invisible to the human eye, they may be used to track the movement of their bearers in both predictable and unforeseen ways.

The recent enterprise of biometric passports overlaps in striking ways with historical attempts at transforming photography into an efficient scientific instrument through archiving and databasing. Photographic archives, allowing comparability across instances, were deployed in the fields of medicine and law in order to, on the one hand, identify criminals and to detect deviant individuals, and on the other hand, elucidate average or typical phenomena across multiple instances. These two nineteenth century strategies, associated with the names Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton, aimed towards gaining control over the fundamental problem of the archive. (Alphonse Bertillon developed what has become the prevailing standard for police portrait photography and also a complex index card classification system meant to enable picking specific individual cases out of the enormous number of images contained in the archive. In contrast, the anthropologist and eugenicist Francis Galton condensed numerous photographs by superimposing them to create a composite image, which was meant to cause individual traits to disappear and the characteristics common to the superimposed portraits to manifest themselves.) As Allan Sekula puts it in his influential essay "The

Body and the Archive”, “Bertillon sought to embed the photograph in the archive. Galton sought to embed the archive in the photograph.” (1986:55) According to Sekula, these two poles characterize the treatment of the archive, which - beyond its police purpose in a stricter sense of the term - soon became the «dominant institutional basis for photographic meaning.» (56) Comparisons with these historical cases, where photography was put to use as a means for surveillance and control, and, infamously, as a means for eugenics, may serve to anticipate societal, ethical, and legal aspects relating to emerging applied uses of biometric identification. The politics of the first of these two historically distant projects, so clear to us in hindsight and so broadly condemned, are not meant to indict the second case of contemporary biometric identification. Rather, by juxtaposing the first, with its highly exposed politics, to the second, the aim is to highlight the need for an equally careful functional and political analysis of the contemporary mobilized archival forms.

4) Project staff, research network and strategic relevance.

The project group consists of: Ina Blom (IFIKK - Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, UiO), Liv Hausken (IMK - Department of Media Studies, UiO), Trond Lundemo (Department of Cinema Studies, Stockholm University) and Eivind Røssaak (The National Library of Norway) and is a collaboration between the four institutions. Ina Blom will act as project leader. The National library contributes one 80% researcher for the duration of the project (Eivind Røssaak) as well as one PhD candidate to be employed from January 2011 onwards. In addition to responding to key questions related to NB's implementation of new archival practices, the project complies with the strategic plans of IFIKK, where modernity and media studies are highlighted as key areas of art historical research, as well as the strategic plans at IMK, where media aesthetics have been singled out as one of two prioritized research fields for the next three-year period. The project will also benefit from the fact that the Department of Cinema Studies at SU is officially designated as a “centre of excellence” due to its international network and publication record (2009-2013).

We plan to invite Wolfgang Ernst (Humboldt University) for a 3-month guest researcher stay at UiO. In addition, the project will draw on the resources of the following network: Christa Blümlinger, Samuel Weber, Mary Ann Doane, Alexander Alberro, Craig Saper, Raymond Bellour, Dieter Daniels, D.N. Rodowick, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Thomas Elsaesser, Aud Sissel Hoel, Anne Jerslev, Wolfgang Ernst, Alexander Galloway, Mark B. N. Hansen, Eric Bulson, Sven Spieker and Thomas Y. Levin, Joshua Greenberg, Howard Besser and Daniel Teruggi.

5) Work progress and publication plan

The project will start in January 2011, with an official opening conference in December 2011. A PhD position has already been announced, for employment from January 2011. The collaborative process within the project will be based on two annual seminars, one open to students and other interested, the other a closed workshop with invited guests. A final conference will be held in the fall of 2013. In addition the project group will meet regularly on a more informal basis to discuss key texts and work in progress. Researchers at the project will benefit from visits to the following institutions: Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, ZKM, Karlsruhe, Centre Pompidou (collection and

archive), Paris, Humboldt University, Berlin, Centre de Recherche en Épistémologie Appliquée (CREA), École Polytechnique, Paris, L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris, The Chicago School of Media Theory, University of Chicago, New York University, NY. The project will result in two anthologies, one monograph and a series of articles for peer-reviewed journals (see more detailed information in the application form).

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