

THE FUTURE OF REMEMBERING:  
HOW MULTIMODAL PLATFORMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE REPURPOSING  
OUR DIGITALLY SHARED PASTS IN CULTURAL HERITAGE  
AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY PRACTICES

by

BRANT BURKEY

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Journalism and Communication  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2014

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Brant Burkey

Title: The Future of Remembering: How Multimodal Platforms and Social Media Are Repurposing Our Digitally Shared Pasts in Cultural Heritage and Collective Memory Practices

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the School of Journalism and Communication by:

Dr. Julianne Newton	Chairperson
Dr. Patricia Curtin	Core Member
Dr. Gabriela Martinez	Core Member
Dr. John Fenn	Institutional Representative

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School
-----------------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded June 2014



2014 Brant Burkey

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License (United States)

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Brant Burkey

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Journalism and Communication

June 2014

Title: The Future of Remembering: How Multimodal Platforms and Social Media Are Repurposing Our Digitally Shared Pasts in Cultural Heritage and Collective Memory Practices

While most media-memory research focuses on particular cultural repository sites, memorials, traumatic events, media channels, or commemorative practices as objects of study to understand the construction of collective memory, this dissertation suggests it is our activity, participation, and interaction with digital content through multimodal platforms and social media applications that demonstrate how communities articulate shared memory in the new media landscape.

This study examines the discursive interpretations of cultural heritage practitioners and participations from the Getty Research Institute, the Prelinger Archive and Library, and the Willamette Heritage Center to better understand how multimodal platforms are being used, how this use is changing the roles of the heritage practitioners and participants in the construction of meaning, and what types of multimodal memory practices are emerging. This research also underscores a reassessment of what constitutes heritage artifacts, authenticity, curatorial authority, and multimodal participation in digital cultural heritage.

My methodological approach for this research takes a multilateral form of data collection, including in-depth interviewing, participant observations, and thematic

analysis, informed by the theoretical frameworks of collective memory, remediation, and gatekeeping and unified by the social theories of art practice, social constructionism, symbolic interactionism, and actor-network theory.

My primary recommendation from this research is that our digital practices of contributing, appropriating, repurposing, and sharing digital content represent new forms of memory practice in a multimodal context. I propose that these multimodal memory practices of interacting with digital content using different devices across different networks coalesce into platformed communities of memory, where communities are shaped and collective memory is shared by our interaction through social networks. I suggest that we need to think of social media output and metadata as being new forms of cultural heritage artifacts and legitimate social records. I also contend that metadata analysis presents new considerations and opportunities for studying the memory of digital content and institutional memory.

It is my hope that these conclusions clarify our contemporary memory practices in the digital era so that we can better understand whose voices will be most prominent in the future articulation of how we remember the past.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Brant Burkey

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California  
California State University, Long Beach

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Media Studies, 2014, University of Oregon  
Master of Science, Communication Studies, 1997, University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Arts, Communications, 1993, Sonoma State University

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Emerging Media, Digital Cultural Production, and Networked Social  
Interaction  
Media-Memory Discourse and Practice  
Media Literacy, Media Criticism, Media History, and Media Ethics

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship (Instructor of Record, Lab Coordinator,  
Teaching Assistant), School of Journalism & Communication, University of  
Oregon, 2010-2014

Adjunct Instructor, Department of Journalism, California State University,  
Long Beach, 2008-2010

Social Sciences Teacher/Journalism Adviser, John Glenn High School, 2003-  
2010

Substitute Teacher, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District, 2002-2003

Associate Editor, Ballard & Tighe Publishing, 2001-2002

Senior Reporter, Crittenden Publishing, 1998-2001

Calendar Editor/Reporter, Marin Independent Journal, 1994-1995

Staff Writer/Reviewer, The Public Reviewer Magazine, 1993-1994

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, School of Journalism & Communication,  
University of Oregon, 2010-2014

Columbia Scholarship, School of Journalism & Communication, University of  
Oregon, 2013

Juried paper accepted, *Constructing the Net: How Cable News Coverage  
Articulates Meaning for the Net Neutrality Debate*, International  
Communications Association (ICA) Conference, 2012

Teacher of the Month Award, John Glenn High School, 2009

Academy Instructor, Transportation Career Academy Program (TCAP) and  
Academy for Careers in Education (ACE), John Glenn High School, 2008-  
2010

PUBLICATIONS:

Burkey, B. (2013). Book Review, "On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a  
New Media Age," Neiger (2011), *Explorations in Media Ecology Journal*,  
12(3-4), 301-302.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my entire committee – Dr. Julianne Newton, Dr. Patricia Curtin, Dr. Gabriela Martinez, and Dr. John Fenn – for their invaluable input, guidance, and support throughout this dissertation process and beyond. I could not have accomplished this longstanding dream of mine without each of you giving me something more to think about along the way. For that, I will be forever indebted. Of particular note, I would also like recognize the unwavering encouragement that my committee chair, Dr. Julianne Newton, offered every step of the way. Julie, despite the enormous challenges life presents, you always found time to offer a kind word and be an indefatigable cheerleader. For that, I am forever grateful.

I would also like to respectfully acknowledge the insightful contributions of the respondents who participated in this research. My ideas were in so many ways shaped by their words, views, and perspectives. Many thanks to each of you who let me peek behind the curtains to better understand the intricacies and appreciation of the role of cultural heritage in the process of shared memory.

Finally, I cannot express enough appreciation to my family, friends, and loved ones, most especially my parents, whom have stood by me through what have been some of the most significant changes in my life thus far. I measure my own accomplishments with the knowledge that each of you contributed something to my journey along the way, and I fully recognize that my dreams would not be becoming a reality if not for all of your guidance, support, and love.

Now, to start the next chapter...



To my sister, for all she has ever been and ever will be, from the moment I carried  
her home from the hospital.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Issue: The Past Is Not What It Used To Be .....	8
Background: Defining Digital Cultural Heritage .....	14
Conclusion.....	24
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE, FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES, LINKAGES, AND GAPS IN RESEARCH .....	27
Review of Literature: Familiar Territory, New Directions.....	30
Surveying the Landscape of Memory Studies.....	36
At the Intersection of New Media and Collective Memory.....	43
Recycling Cultural Heritage Artifacts into Digital Memories.....	54
Gatekeeping Digital Memories .....	58
Remediating the Social in Theory .....	65
The Gap in Research: Multimodal Memory Practices in Digital Heritage .....	75
Conclusion.....	82
III. TAKING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH .....	84
The Many Interfaces of Digital Heritage .....	88
The Getty Research Institute .....	88
The Prelinger Archive and Library .....	91
Willamette Valley Heritage Highlights .....	95
Further Rationale of Selection and Organization .....	97

Chapter	Page
Research Methods .....	99
In-Depth Interviews .....	100
Participant Observations.....	106
Thematic Analysis .....	109
IV. REPOSITIONING THE INSTITUTION AND REINTERPRETING CULTURAL HERITAGE .....	115
Persistent Theme of Privileging Access .....	116
New Forms of Cultural Heritage.....	127
New Roles of Cultural Heritage.....	140
Democratization Versus Curatorial Authority .....	150
Reconceptualizing Institutional Thinking and Practice .....	167
Conclusion.....	180
V. THE IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIMODAL MEMORY PRACTICES .....	182
Shaping the Memory Debate Through Cultural Heritage Institutions.....	184
Negotiating Between Authentic Experience and Digital Surrogates .....	194
The Interplay Between Multimodal Platforms and Memory Practice .....	211
Conclusion.....	246
VI. NEW MEMORY PRACTICES THROUGH MULTIMODAL PLATFORMS .....	249
Privileging Platforms.....	251
Privileging Practices .....	269
Privileging Participation.....	308
Conclusion.....	320
VII. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND FURTHER DISCUSSION.....	322

Chapter	Page
Findings.....	327
RQ1: How Are Multimodal Platforms Reshaping Cultural Heritage and Its Forms?.....	327
Access.....	327
New Forms of Cultural Heritage.....	329
New Roles of Cultural Heritage Practitioners.....	330
Democratization Versus Curatorial Authority .....	331
Reconceptualizing Institutional Thinking and Practice .....	333
RQ2: What Are the Implications of These Multimodal Platforms and Practices on Memory Construction in a Digital Landscape?.....	334
Shaping the Memory Debate Through Cultural Heritage .....	335
Negotiating Authentic Experience and Digital Surrogates .....	337
Interplay Between Multimodal Platforms and Memory Practice ..	338
RQ3: What Memory Practices are Being Privileged and Articulated in Digital Heritage Through Multimodal Platforms? .....	342
Privileging Platforms.....	343
Privileging Practices .....	347
Privileging Participation .....	351
Final Analysis and Interpretation .....	353
Significance, Contributions & Further Considerations .....	356
Connecting the Dots in Theory.....	360
Limitations .....	364
Recommendations.....	369
Concluding Thoughts.....	371

Chapter	Page
APPENDICES.....	374
A. INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS ...	374
B. PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM.....	375
C. TRANSCRIPT COVER LETTER .....	377
REFERENCES CITED .....	378

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*The digital suggests that we may have need to rethink how we conceive of memory; that we are changing what we consider to be the past; that the act of recall, of recollection and of remembering is changing in itself.*  
(Garde-Hansen, 2009, p. 1)

The show was about to begin.

Outside, the dreary gray of a rainy spring day in Eugene, Oregon, was all but forgotten as film archivist Rick Prelinger began his digital screening of *Lost Landscapes of Detroit, Year 2* in the Bijou Art Cinema, a Spanish mission style building that had previously been home to both a church and later a mortuary before becoming the university district's independent movie house. The choice of venue was ideal as the location provided a perfect juxtaposition for the past and present to collide in more ways than one.

It was spring 2012, and Prelinger's film, *Lost Landscapes of Detroit, Year 2*, was a compilation of people's home movies, industrial films, outtakes, and newsreels of the Motor City from the early 1900s to the early 1970s. Prelinger had culled the clips from his own archives of educational, industrial, and amateur films and remediated them into a digital production, transmitted from his laptop computer to the theater's larger screen. The screening itself was part of a two-day symposium by the Cinema Pacific at the University of Oregon, "Media Mashers: Raiders of the Archives," which was co-sponsored by the UO Libraries, UO Arts and Administration Program, School of Journalism and Communication, and Cinema

Studies programs. The symposium brought together a variety of archivists, artists, scholars, students, and members of the public who have an interest in issues related to visual representational forms, repurposing, and the future of archival material.

A keynote speaker for one of the event's presentations, Prelinger was now about to introduce his film as a free screening open to the public at the Bijou. In addition to being a compilation of home movies and a free show, there were other elements that made this screening notable. First, Prelinger explained, there would be no traditional linear narrative, no plot, no actors, and no soundtrack. More significantly, Prelinger invited his audience to participate in the construction of meaning and interpretive processes of the film by voicing any recognition, knowledge, insight, or memories they may have regarding the images they might see of Detroit. In essence, he encouraged members of the audience who may have lived in Detroit, had relatives from there, or had spent time in this city of industry to provide their own soundtrack and storyline.

Scenes from everyday life in Detroit began to populate the silent screen, as if from an era long since dormant. As the screen continued to shimmer with the projected motion of these home movies, some shown in black-and-white and others in color film, their images from throughout the past century – of streets, buildings, factories, even people long since gone – came alive once again. Of course, that is how it is with any film, always previously recorded, always a glimpse into the past. What was most revealing this time, however, was the audience's response in the present...and the implications for the future of memory.

At the sight of the famed Hudson's department store building, one man spoke

of his recollections of frequenting the toy section as a child, only to be corrected by an older woman as to which floor the toy department was actually on. When the smoke-choked landscape over a Detroit factory came into view, another younger woman noted her revulsion for the pollution that was evident, only to be rebuked by an elderly couple. The elder gentleman told the young woman in an admonishing tone that what she was seeing was “not pollution, but progress.” His wife nodded in agreement and seemed to finish his thoughts by emphatically adding, “It means jobs.” The movie continued like this as an open conversation between members of the audience, complete with oppositional readings and participatory dimensions of retrospection.

Overall, the screening was a collection of source material from user-generated cultural production, repurposed into a digital film, being shared in public, as a participatory mediasphere that allowed for a novel form of interacting with the past. In addition, this film was also being made available through multimodal platforms by Prelinger’s video archive, which was acquired by the Library of Congress in 2002 and open to further remediation, repurposing, and remixing. This filmic representation was being shared as a reconstruction of experience and memory that provided a deliberate act of remembrance, with commemorative dimensions articulated through the negotiation of meaning. What made the moment so fascinating was not the film itself, the textual site of memory, but the participatory element that allowed for new discursive constructions of meaning through the mobilization and sharing of knowledge through social practice and interaction.



As a Ph.D. student studying media-memory discourse, this was a defining moment for my own academic inquiry.

I have long been interested in the social documentation of history. After all, my master's thesis involved studying the limitations of actual-footage film as historical artifacts. In it, I made the common sense argument that increasing access to recording technologies would only lead to the proliferation of people recording their everyday experiences, which might one day reshape how we consider the past. My conception at that point was that an increase in the use of video recorders would allow for more social documentation. Of course, in the mid-1990s, I could never have imagined what would develop in the subsequent decade through the possibilities of the Internet, mobile technologies, and social networking. That I might one day be able to access the Internet through my phone, let alone take digital photos and videos and upload them to the Internet for the whole world to see through the same device, was far beyond my envisioning.

Obviously, how the human experience is shared has gone through radical transformation in the past 20 years. In this digital age, the past is not what it used to be, at least in form and function of how we remember it. What transfixes my attention, though, are not just the burgeoning technologies that allow for representing digital content, but rather how the interactive and participatory capabilities of Web 2.0, mobile technologies, and multimodal platforms are changing social practice, particularly in regard to memory.

As a society, we are now documenting so much more of our lives and sharing our experiences through digital, networked platforms that it is hard to imagine how

significantly this will change the ways in which we consider the past. We are producing such a wealth of digital artifacts of our everyday experiences that the traditional institutions of cultural heritage – e.g., the libraries, the archives, the museums - will no longer be the central repositories of our cultural production and memories. It is foreseeable that future historians will be perusing the evidence of our personal pasts through platforms of digital data that we have chosen to record, upload, and share in unprecedented ways. What digital traces are we leaving behind? What are we revealing about ourselves for future generations? How will this digital material change the ways in which we remember?

As I began wondering about these potentials in the same spring of the Cinema Pacific symposium event, I was also taking a graduate course called “Media Boundaries,” which explored the blurring of landscapes among media institutions, technologies, and audiences in participatory culture. The professor conducted much of the course through discussions initiated in Wordpress and Diigo style discussion boards, where both the professor and students could contribute and share commentary, content, and hyperlinks to related resources. Rather than merely accomplishing assignments or following a static syllabus, this course became an ongoing conversation that was more participatory and beyond the confines of a classroom discussion. This engaging experience only furthered my interest in how our social practices for constructing meaning in a digital environment were undergoing a significant shift, which in my mind necessitated a closer look, particularly in how we understand, interpret, and construct our pasts as we navigate the unexplored territories of these digital boundaries and their mediated

artifacts.

As such, while most media-memory research focuses on particular cultural repository sites, memorials, traumatic events, media channels, texts, or commemorative practices as objects of study to understand the construction of collective memory, this research project concentrates more specifically on how the interactive and participatory nature of generating, contributing, selecting, appropriating, repurposing, and sharing digital cultural heritage artifacts through multimodal platforms provides more insight into how communities articulate shared memory in the new media landscape.

In other words, despite the commemorative dimensions and deliberate acts of remembrance that are often the focus of memory studies, one thing that needs more attention is the social practice involved in memory making, particularly in a digital, multimodal context. I want to look at the process, the activity, and the participatory elements of how collective memories can be shaped through the acts of sharing and remediating content in digital, interactive, and networked environments, more than just where these collective memories have the potential to reside.

The purpose is to determine how cultural heritage sites are using digital interfaces and multimodal platforms to position the public as more active and participatory producers of meaning in the construction of collective memory. For the purposes of this study, multimodal platforms are defined as various online points of access (including digital interfaces, mobile communications, and social media), which allow the public and users to interact with heritage collections on

different devices, across different networks, from different locations. Similarly, multimodal activities and memory practices are defined as the specific methods of engagement, interaction, and participation between users and the digital cultural artifacts, such as recording, sharing, commenting on, or repurposing, that have potential for reconfiguring the process of shared remembering.

The primary conceptualization for this research, then, is that it is essential to study the digital practices that multimodal participatory media allow for to better understand how collective memory is constructed in a digital landscape. Put more simply, how are we changing the way we collectively remember by participating in multimodal social documentation, remediation, and content sharing?

To examine this complex issue, this dissertation focuses on the discursive interpretations of practitioners and participants of three digital heritage archives and their digital platforms – the Getty Research Institute, the Prelinger Archive and Library, and Willamette Heritage Center – informed by the theoretical frameworks of remediation, gatekeeping, and collective memory, as well as the social theories of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theory. This allows me to examine the multiple facets of digital cultural heritage platforms, the participatory processes involved in their digital interfaces, and the discursive meaning constructed by heritage practitioners and participants. Deeper understanding of this issue is gained from my chosen methods of in-depth interviews, limited participant observations, and thematic analyses of interview data, as well as their communications, sites, collections, and modalities.

Thus, this dissertation examines the discursive interpretations of cultural

heritage practitioners and participants to address: (1) how multimodal platforms are reshaping cultural heritage and its forms; (2) the implications that these multimodal platforms and practices have on memory construction in a digital landscape; and (3) enumerating which social practices are being privileged in digital cultural heritage through multimodal platforms.

### **THE ISSUE: THE PAST IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE**

While communication research concerning the discursive practices and impact of media technologies on the historical process and collective memory is not a new consideration with the development of the Internet, the more interactive nature of Web 2.0 and its resultant user-generated, content-sharing capacities is resulting in the proliferation of new ways to record, preserve, articulate, and share mediated experiences across digital domains. This requires new consideration for how these digital technologies and their representational forms are reshaping how we consider the past and what memory practices are in the new media landscape. This has led to a growing body of research elucidating the implications of digital representations of the past on collective memory (Erll, 2011; Garde-Hansen et al., 2009; Hoskins, 2009; Crownshaw, 2010; Van Dijck, 2008). The theoretical perspectives presented in their research regarding the impact of digital media on memory is explored more fully in the review of literature found in Chapter II of this dissertation.

But where our collective memories were once shared by tuning in to the same radio programs or watching the same television shows, we are all now staring

at different screens and participating in different ways with digital media content than when we were passive listening or viewing audiences of mass media productions. That is not to say that we were ever totally passive. But I would argue that watching something on television or listening to the radio is an entirely different form of activity than how we interact with digital content or social media applications (e.g., uploading, liking, sharing, linking, searching, annotating, repurposing). Similarly, in the digital age, how memorable media content may be is not just a matter of who watched it but how and with whom we choose to share it. So our notions of collective memory may no longer be constitutive of how many people shared in a mediated experience but rather how we shared that mediated content through what I call *platformed communities of memory*.

I use this term as an extension of Malkki's (1997) formulation of what she termed "accidental communities of memory," a social constellation of people who have been brought together haphazardly and have in common the sharing of an experience or historical occurrence. She points out that this type of community does not necessarily share in familial, communal, or national characteristics but are communities brought together indeterminately through out-of-the-ordinary moments such as being in a disaster, war, or an internment camp together. In her view, it is not the event as much as what connects these people from having shared their experience.

My notion of platformed communities of memory extends Malkki's articulations to the connections of memory that occur in a networked environment. The distinguishing factor is that platformed communities of memory are formed by

all of the people in a social network that interact with particular digital content. For example, I may have no direct or personal contact with someone who views or comments on something I've shared because they are not in my immediate social network. However, because of the networked environment, I am still sharing a memory of an experience interacting with digital content with everyone that "liked", commented on, shared, or repurposed that same material. This connects us as a platformed community of memory that is driven by our digital social networks.

Thus, my concept of platformed communities of memory is not in contrast to Malkki's accidental communities of memory, it is simply situating the sharing of experience in a digital context and environment. Another point to be emphasized here is that rather than extraneous events connecting people as in Malkki's view, my conceptualization is that we are connecting ourselves to others by our own digital sharing practices within broader social networks.

There are so many examples of this occurring on such a broad scale through social media use that it is almost impossible to imagine the interconnected virality of images, videos, articles, links, and other digital content that people are sharing or interacting with every day. When someone finds something of interest, then "likes" it, comments on it, or shares it through Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube with someone else in their social network, and so on, and so on, before they know it, there is an entire platformed community of memory connected by that activity or surrounding that one item of digital content.

Think of the Kony 2012 video, a 30-minute documentary about the fugitive Ugandan warlord who forced children to become soldiers in Africa, which became

an overnight sensation in March 2012. The video was shared so extensively through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube that it became one of the most watched videos of all time in the shortest time ever. The sharing of and commenting on this one video also led to extensive social awareness of the issue and an enormous public outcry for action to bring this African warlord to justice, even though it had already been an ongoing problem for years. Then there were the widespread Facebook Timeline videos that showed every user's Facebook activity over the past ten years or so, which were shared almost as if a digital slideshow of an individual's personal events, activities, and memories. Even some video game platforms, such as PlayStation 4 with games like *Watchdogs*, allow players to record their favorite moments of playing video games to be shared with friends or other players. Or how many times has a significant news event been learned of not from the legacy media of cable, television, or radio but from someone posting or linking to something on Facebook or Twitter?

All of these are exemplary of how multimodal platforms and social media are changing our memory practices. We are interacting with and sharing professional and user-generated content, across networks and platforms, as indicators of our interests, our experiences, and what we want to be remembered. This content and activity is also being driven by our own choices of platforms, with whom we want to share it, and by deciding our own comfort levels of involvement. Thus, with user-generated content constituting a growing segment of social media output, it is becoming essential to understand how the social process of sharing digital content might also reinforce our collective cultural memories of events that can now be



accessed and distributed across a multitude of devices, platforms, and networks.

Every time we save, post, or share digital content, we are in essence anticipating that it might have prospective use in the future, which is in effect preparing later users for the digital practice of remembering. Put another way, every digital object is equivalent to a recollection. Every Web page, image, text, video, or graphic that we interact with online was already recorded in the past and can then be refreshed for our reconsideration in the present or the future. As broader segments of the population broadcast their lives through the lenses of these multimodal digital platforms, tools, and technologies, this enables others to share in their own experience, allows for new modes of self-presentation and personal expression, creates and maintains social relations, and constructs personal and collective memories. As a result, this user-generated content and cultural production is changing what constitutes our memories and how we remember the past in the digital age.

With each status update, photo, and video we upload, each search we conduct, we are leaving behind a record of our presence, our activities, our interests, and our digital experience, no matter how seemingly inconsequential. These data, then, become our legacy, the proof of our past. Much like the outline of a hand imprinted on a cave wall painting, handcrafted mementos, personal letters, family portraits, or other documents and correspondence that once comprised the histories of previous generations, our digital traces are now the cultural ephemera that are increasingly making up our own artifacts of memory, evidence that we passed this way at all.

Unlike our predecessors, however, the sheer array of devices to record and multiplicity of screens to access these memories are ensuring that even more of the human experience is being shared than was ever before possible (Morris-Suzuki, 2005). We are, after all, committing to digital memory an assemblage of interactive media content, including emails, Web posts, blogs, digital photos and videos, RSS feeds, audio files, wikis and Web pages (Garde-Hansen, 2009), all of which can intrinsically serve as digital cultural artifacts, fragments that link the past and present as shared reminders of cultural production and processes. And much like biological memories themselves, this digital content is continuously open to revisiting, rearranging, and re-imagining (Parry, 2007).

At the same time, as more people upload and share their own personal experiences to Internet repositories and digital archives, we need to focus our attention on how these forms of cultural production are considered as historical and cultural artifacts, and how Internet users interact with digital media as sociotechnical practice for creating collective experience and constructing meaning of the past.

How the public engages in digital practices of remembering is particularly important in the area of digital heritage initiatives, where traditional cultural heritage institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, and preservation societies, are increasingly employing digital interfaces and multimodal platforms to connect the public with their collections. Whereas cultural heritage institutions have traditionally collected, documented, preserved, conserved, and exhibited culturally significant artifacts and sites, they are also now contending with how to use digital

media and networked systems of mobile technologies to provide new forms of access, content generation, reproduction, manipulation, storage, distribution, engagement, and participation (Jones-Garmil, 1997). Put another way, they can no longer simply depict evidence of the past but must now also offer new ways of memorializing across different platforms.

So while researchers have spent more than the past two decades considering the implications of what it means to digitize their material collections of cultural production into intangible representations, what has yet to be thoroughly explored is the potential for these institutions to use the networked environments of the digital media to allow for increasing interaction with and sharing of content as ways to articulate meaning, frame, construct, and transmit their collections of mediated memories (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007; Helmsley et al., 2005). As these organizations and institutions shift from being sites of storage, preservation, and exhibition of cultural artifacts to digital conduits of cultural content exchange and intertextual relations, then, how might this transform the ways in which society can consider its past?

#### **BACKGROUND: DEFINING DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE**

In 1972, UNESCO drafted an international legal agreement that spelled out the categories for what should be recognized, protected, and conserved as cultural heritage. Their initial categories broadly designated monuments, buildings, sites, and tangible artifacts, which were seen as having universal value and significance from around the world. In 2003, that charter was broadened and ratified to include

what they termed, “intangible heritage.” As a result, conservation and protection were also extended to other cultural domains and manifestations, including oral traditions, languages, social practices, rituals, performing arts, and festivals (Addison, 2007; Ahmad, 2006; Champion, 2007).

Subsequently, these tangible and intangible cultural heritage sites, objects, and practices have been identified and located in a cross-section of institutions, cultural projects, organizations, and foundations, such as museums, libraries, archives, universities, galleries, historical and preservation societies, as well as visual resource, performing arts, and other humanities organizations. These cultural heritage initiatives, organizations, and institutions are often considered “memory institutions” (Dalbello, 2009; Terras, 2010; van Dijck, 2011) because they enable the preservation, promotion, and exhibition of cultural production, including artists’ representational forms, oral traditions, written narratives, monuments, rituals, and other media forms.

If this paper is to settle on one definition of cultural heritage, though, it would have to rely on Dalbello’s (2009) succinct description that “heritage is created through acts of collecting and preservation by institutions such as archives, libraries, museums, through processes of social memory by which popular significance becomes based on memory stores and historical materials” (p. 1). Such a definition will guide this study as we consider cultural heritage institutions as helping society to remember events that not everyone experienced directly by maintaining artifacts and narratives, as well as transmitting from generation to generation certain cultural values and interpretations, while remaining mindful that

they are not necessarily speaking the truth of the past as much as they are providing versions for our shared remembering.

However, while these cultural heritage institutions have traditionally preserved material collections or been site specific, they, like everyone else, have had to grapple with an increasingly digital world, where materiality has become digital representation and location is determined by network access. One response to this change is that most of these cultural heritage initiatives, organizations, and institutions have begun digitizing at least some of their collections and embracing the dynamic interfaces allowed by the new media technologies.

According to Addison (2007), these forms of cultural heritage now being reproduced in digital contexts are increasingly being cast as, referenced to, or associated with “virtual heritage,” “new heritage,” “digital curation,” “digital heritage,” and “digital cultural heritage.” For the purposes of this study, I will refer throughout to *digital cultural heritage*, *digital heritage*, and *multimodal heritage platforms* to encompass the heritage activity, material, and content that is implicitly produced, presented, circulated or otherwise interacted with through the means of participatory digital technologies, Web platforms, and social media applications.

Early concerns with digital cultural heritage dealt with the financial and technological process of digitizing, cataloging, and making available their resources and collections (Helmsley et al., 2005). More attention was then brought to bear on the digital artifacts themselves, their context in digital form, and whether they were equivalent to the material objects in terms of authentic experience (an ongoing subject that will be revisited again in Chapter V of this study). As more and more of

the cultural heritage institutions developed initiatives and programs to make their collections digital, they also faced questions about their authoritative role in proscribing meaning and context as their foci shifted more toward user orientation and engagement (Parry, 2010).

Other practical issues they encountered included storage, selection, access, searchability, quality, functionality, as well as intellectual property laws dealing with copyright and security applications for use and transmission as their digital collections became available through online applications and platforms. Innovations in technology have also contributed to the questioning of the visualization, modeling, and reconstruction of sites and artifacts through virtual environments. From a cultural perspective, additional questions have arisen related to access, power structures, democratization, social value, identity, learning, and interpretation. In essence, during those initial years of digitization, the cultural heritage industry was primarily considering what it meant to offer digital artifacts and how effective they were, only to have more pressing issues unfold as the technology itself transformed in terms of what was possible.

Now, with the proliferation of social media, mobile communication technologies, and multimodal platforms, there needs to be some appraisal of the complexities of participation and emerging social practices interwoven with how people use these digital technologies for the sake of memory construction. For example, digital cultural heritage collections that allow for dynamic interfaces with online content can now include temporal, locative, and categorical information, generating an unprecedented opportunity for historians, librarians, archivists,

curators and the general public to create interactive and dynamic Web experiences with digital cultural heritage collections. Examples of these dynamic interfaces include digitized archival collections; geo-referenced historical maps and drawings; visual environment interfaces; interactive timelines; navigational and searching tools; discussion forums; news and social media feeds (including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); user-generated materials (including blogs, photographs, maps, videos); as well as comment sections, forums, user groups, event calendars, and updates.

To be even more specific, members of the public can now find a historic site using locative information and maps on their phone. Once there, audiovisual or categorical information can be accessed on the same device, giving further descriptions of significance of the location, complete with time lapse images or interactive timelines, while also allowing individuals to record their own perspectives, photos, and videos of what it meant for them to visit the site, which can then be shared via the social media, discussed, or contested in an online forum or comment section, as well as further expand the narrative and construction of meaning beyond the curatorial authority of the heritage organization. Considering these possibilities, according to Bearman and Geber (2008), “what is changing is the availability to museums, libraries, archives and other agencies of culture of a set of new infrastructures that assume smart objects, smart places, smart materials and socially connected users” (p. 395).

Further examples of this include the Library of Congress, the Powerhouse Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, Steve Museum and so many more institutions that have modeled their websites and participatory media platforms after social

media applications like Flickr, Twitter, and Facebook (Terras, 2010). Here, they allow for social tagging and annotation, blogs and comments, and the submission of user-generated materials. More and more, the participatory elements and sharing capabilities of these digital platforms are “facilitating ‘socially-distributed curation’ to help make sense of and derive meaning from our collective memories through a socially-distributed process” (Liu, 2010).

Thus, the capabilities of these emerging digital technologies are leading cultural heritage institutions to “increasingly view their role as aggregators and coordinators of information, in addition to their roles as collecting and archiving institutions” (Klaebe & Burgess, 2008, p. 6). The old bricks-and-mortar model of cultural heritage institutions can no longer subsist on a one-size-fits-all process of letting the public access and view its collections, but must now also consider the “developmental paradigm that perceives a move towards greater connectivity (the use of networks), greater mobility (portable, wireless media), and greater individualization (media driven by intelligent agents that are responsive to the user’s specific needs)” (Parry & Arbach, 2007, p. 289). Increasingly, cultural heritage institutions must now give more thoughtful analyses for how these technologies foster social practices that can lead to knowledge sharing and creation.

To clarify an assertion made by Parry (2007), however, the argument should not be technologically deterministic in how communication technology reshapes society as much as an attempt to explore the emerging practices shaped by culture in response to the technologies, privileging cultural agency over technological functionality. In other words, this study will be less concerned with the tools and



more of the resulting practices. The argument proposed here is that the discussion should have less to do with the technology and how it can alter/enhance the audience experience/knowledge and should instead be more about what the user can contribute in context and interpretation as a result of the participatory landscape of the digital Web 2.0 (and beyond) environment.

While these institutions are providing more dynamic formats and collaborative possibilities, their strategies and tools are not being developed in isolation. As social media present more opportunities for linking, sharing, and distributing, what is recommended is that more study should be done on the modes of interaction, active participation, and communication through these participatory heritage platforms as an extension of what should be considered cultural heritage.

More artifacts, voices, and versions are now considered representative of our shared pasts in digital cultural heritage with the advent of mobile communication technologies and social media. The implication is that the more people participate and share in the digital environment, the more they are creating new memory practices. So while questions in cultural heritage once dealt with how to digitize collections or make the experience more engaging for users to access collections, now it should be more of an issue about how multimodal participation through social media allows for the public to contribute more of their own materials and perspectives in sharing cultural heritage.

Simon (2010) points this out when she explains how participatory elements of cultural institutions can lead to an enhanced, more provocative experience and more appealing, meaningful forms of interaction. Her focus was on cultural

institutions and social engagement and her purpose was to identify best practices and models of participation. She proposes a variety of recommendations that include personalized on-site experiences; an audience-centric approach; recommendation systems that could connect and re-arrange objects based on personal interest; user-generated content; social platforms; social objects; immersive environments; facilitated social experiences; and contributory platforms that promoted community dialogue. While Simon encourages visitors to contribute their own stories, objects, feedback, and memories, she also notes that collaboration/aggregation of user input should go beyond just preferences, opinions, recommendations, and personal experiences to provide more provocative relations, juxtapositions and attribution of meaning.

Russo (2011) similarly argues that as museums employ more participatory media technologies, these “online cultural exchanges can explore fundamental questions of meaning as they relate to audiences, shifting the focus of museum communication away from ‘what matters to them’ to ‘what matters to us’” (p. 329). This is an important turn to Russo, Watkins, Kelly and Chan (2008), who assert that, “Given these arguments, it is proposed that museums could use social media to create or improve popular knowledge-sharing networks, in which cultural participants share images, information, and experiences throughout communities. By promoting user-generated content, museums could enable cultural participants to be both critics and creators of digital culture” (p. 28).

The fundamental premise of this reorientation is that products of archive materials and curator explanations as authoritative sources of knowledge will

increasingly have to vie with users who want to produce, seek out, and share their own meanings (Adams, 2007; Labrador & Chilton, 2009; Tan & Rahaman, 2009). This not only challenges the curatorial authority of cultural institutions but also provides a reversal of fortune for what van Dijk (2012) terms “the network society” or van Dijk (2013) calls “the culture of connectivity.” According to both, the interconnections of hyperlinks and hypermedia offers a new culture of media use that gives users more ability to roam, contribute, and process in ways that are not only more participatory but also redirect the flow and control being experienced across the board by audiences of legacy mass media (e.g., television, radio, and newspaper). While scholars like Zelizer (1992), Schudson (1992), Dayan and Katz (1992), Edgerton and Rollins (2001), Grange (2003), Fogu (2009), and Monaci and Tirocchi (2010) have all argued that various forms of mass media serve as agents for disseminating social memory through their productions, it is becoming insufficient to simply explain the broadcasting and reception models of legacy media in the more participatory age of Web 2.0, mobile technologies, and social networking.

The landscape of communicative practice must now account for the broadcasting of cultural systems via the mainstream media *and* the participation with “peer-produced culture” (Burgess & Green, 2009, 14). Jenkins (2013) describes a similar challenge with what he terms, “spreadable media,” the process whereby media can circulate through cultural practice, social logic, and technical innovation beyond the intention of distribution, and that can help to explain why sharing is the common practice, how we appraise value, and shape the media landscape. Van Dijk

(2013) proposes that such connectivity through cultural activity and exchange as a result of social media applications alters the mediascape and the curation process because it creates more opportunities for social networking, communities of interest, collaboration, interactivity, sharing, and the experience of sociality. Furthermore, the cultural practices and social value of liking, following, friending, sharing, tagging, trending, cross-referencing, linking, subscribing, appropriating, repurposing, and commenting are all manifestations that reveal an ecosystem of new memory practice through “platformed sociality” (p. 23).

As such, insights about collective memory should also now include negotiating the networks and platforms that enable cultural participation rather than simply cultural consumption. Erll (2009), Falci (2011), Neiger (2011), Pentzold and Sommer (2011), and Sa (2009) have all presented logical conclusions that the increasing connectivity of society through the networked systems of the digital media, the Internet, and mobile technologies promote the capacity for society to add more voices to the mix and share even more of its experience; thus, create more shared memories. This is important because, as Kansteiner (2002) has argued, it is vital for future memory studies to focus on the active participants, audiences, and communities themselves who are making the memories, not just the places and things that represent or articulate the memories. This has significant implications for cultural heritage sites that have long tried to retain their curatorial authority as the keepers of collective memories, be they museums, archives, or other institutions, because they are now faced with having to contend with new meaning constructed and shaped by broader cultural participation through digital platforms.

In this way, the flow of information in the realms of remembrance is now being reoriented from the top tiers of the heritage field and can now be conveyed, confronted, and extracted by the audience in new ways across multiple platforms. As Parry (2007) explains, “Rather than being approached by the museum, audiences instead have the means (through digital network hypermedia) to initiate and create, collect and interpret in their own time and space, on their own terms. It amounts to nothing less than a realignment of the axes of curatorship” (p. 102). At stake, then, are the curatorial authority of these institutions, their commemorative practices, and the articulation of how we remember the past in the digital age.

## **CONCLUSION**

The logic of collective memory as social practice is finding new prospects, if not achieving clear fruition, through the participatory culture of networked communities and the facilitation of digital content sharing. After all, the more digital content that is uploaded and shared online is allowing for more voices and perspectives than only the material produced and broadcast by the experts of the culture industries. Put succinctly, more people can now through digital media assign cultural value to what we choose to remember and how.

That is why in Giaccardi’s (2012) compilation of essays examining the effects of social media on cultural heritage, she argues that, “Today mobile and ubiquitous technologies are accelerating these changes by enabling users to participate, spontaneously and continuously, in activities of collection, preservation and interpretation of digitized heritage content and new digitally mediated forms of

heritage practice” (p. 2). In this regard, the complexities of participatory culture and the social media are likely to influence traditional heritage in ways that will extend to new social practices, perspectives, and “processes of remembering” (p. 14).

Russo et al (2007) also assert that the use of social media in cultural heritage reflects an increasing trend toward a different type of interactive experience and as an enabling factor for communities of interest and practice to enjoy a more ‘peer-oriented model’ of knowledge exchange. Liu (2010) considers these possibilities for networking our memories, by sharing what we think is important and worth remembering via our social media participation, as being ‘socially-distributed curation.’ At the heart of this sharing process, however, we must presume like Affleck and Kvan (2007) that what merits additional attention beyond the capabilities for sharing are the discursive interpretations about the underlying significance and meaning of how and why we interact with digital heritage.

The participatory heritage platforms that are addressed in this study are the places where these discursive negotiations of digital memory and social practices converge, collide, and must contend with each other, and the ways in which the social dynamics are cultivated by and through these interfaces are legion. So what now deserves more attention than simply the media technologies themselves and their texts are the discursive interpretations and social practices they engender in digital environments, which could shape distinct modes of shared memory as people increasingly interact and participate through online networks. Erll (2011) supports this logic by pointing out in her examination of the interplay between media technologies and social phenomena that “social processes are important in any

discussion of media, and even more so in the field of cultural remembrance” (p. 123).

A particularly vexing issue to consider is the impact of multimodal platforms, tools, and media on the shifting and often loosely defined terrain of cultural heritage, particularly as these institutions establish digital initiatives that allow their publics new ways in which to interact with their cultural production, artifacts, and even privilege user-generated content in their collections. Because the intent of many digital repositories of cultural heritage is to extend the boundaries of memory by keeping records of past interest and shared experience, how are they now informing the ways we remember, supplementing social knowledge, and reconfiguring the mediation of collective memory through the use of multimodal platforms? How also might these digital interfaces position the public as more active and participatory producers of meaning in the construction of collective memory?

This introductory chapter argues that the cultural heritage industry is undergoing significant changes as it enables the public to participate with and actively produce material for heritage collections through multimodal platforms, reconfiguring memory practices in a digital context. The next chapter reviews the foundational literature and explores the theoretical principles that are used throughout this dissertation to understand the concepts and advance the subsequent arguments in detail. Chapter II also further defines cultural heritage, argues that there is a gap in research that deserves more attention, and introduces the research questions that serve as the basis for this dissertation

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE, FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES, LINKAGES, AND GAPS IN RESEARCH

*In future years, digital heritage programs will place hundreds of thousands of images and other data on the Web, altering our visual memory and cultural perception in unknown ways.  
(Miller, 2010, p. 302)*

If we are to consider the possibilities of an intersection between technology and memory, one that positions audiences as active participants in the mediating process and construction of meaning in digital heritage, it is first necessary to explore the theoretical foundations that inform this study. This chapter reviews the relevant literature, theories, and research traditions that have emerged from interdisciplinary fields and that guide the present exploration of multimodal memory practices in digital heritage found within this dissertation. In order to accurately map the subsequent interpretations and conclusions, there are several areas of theory that are particularly useful for this research: collective memory/media-memory discourse, remediation, and gatekeeping. Additionally, because the assertion of this dissertation is that multimodal participation as a form of social practice holds the most promise for understanding how shared memory is constructed in a digital landscape, a section of this chapter is devoted to exploring the foundational concepts of and several approaches to social theory that also inform this research.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature that reiterates some of the considerations mentioned in the previous chapter regarding the transformative



consequences facing cultural heritage as a result of digital platforms and their relation to the articulation of media memory. In this section, the reader is invited to orient himself/herself to the terrain of the fields of cultural heritage, memory studies, digital technologies, and where they all might be intersecting.

Next, this chapter examines in two distinct sections the background of collective memory theory and the media-memory discourse informing this study's understanding of how digital content sharing and multimodal participation present the opportunity for reconfiguring memory through digital social practice. These sections track the development of collective memory theory and show how it is increasingly applied through media-memory discourse in the digital landscape. While much of the literature suggests that we need to rethink the complex interaction between digital media and memory, the primary conceptualization here is to examine what forms of multimodal participation are indicative of potentially new forms of digital memory practice.

Third, relying on Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of remediation, this study looks at how the repurposing of digital artifacts is an essential part of the content sharing made possible by the digital heritage platforms. Remediation theory also highlights that it is not just media technologies that are being refashioned into new forms but also supposes the repurposing of the structures of meaning attributed to these objects and new social practices for how we consider the past. By better understanding how users are re-appropriating, remediating, and repurposing these memory objects, then, a clearer picture emerges regarding what types of artifacts are being privileged and how they are being used.

In the next theory section, Lewin's (1943) theory of gatekeeping is used to examine the evolving role of heritage practitioners as digital heritage initiatives initiate the relinquishing of curatorial authority by opening up their collections to increasing public participation through multimodal platforms. This theoretical framework suits the needs of this project by revealing whether the public is indeed being positioned as more active producers of meaning in the construction of collective memory, and in what ways the role of the heritage practitioners are changing in these participatory, digital environments.

Subsequently, in general terms, the next section is devoted to developing a framework of social theory that also grounds this study and its research methods. It is proposed here that several social theory approaches for studying social practice are the most applicable, including art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories. The explanation for these choices reflects the intent of this project in that these approaches allow me to interrogate the creative milieu, constructed meanings, and connective associations that are articulated by the participants, from their own perspectives and involvement, in digital heritage.

Finally, the concluding section of this chapter introduces the gap in literature and research questions this dissertation addresses. This conclusion also clarifies some of the research terms and provides the framework for the next chapter, which elucidates the research methods that are employed for this study.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE: FAMILIAR TERRITORY, NEW DIRECTIONS**

Scholars have in recent decades increasingly situated the participatory and reciprocal digital media platforms as memory agents within the cultural heritage milieu, considering the possibility for new formulations of access, context, and meaning, as well as posing the questions of context concerning the circumstances and venues where representations of media memory might be observed, experienced, and researched. This section summarizes relevant literature to chart the various perspectives of what is being considered before making the subsequent linkages to the foundational theories that are applied to this dissertation research.

To begin with, the clear implication of this study is that the multifaceted capabilities of the digital revolution are altering the ways we confront the traces of our past. This is true in regards to the types of artifacts we encounter, where we encounter them, who decides what we will encounter, and what we do once we encounter them, as so much of this now occurs through digital mediation. This transformative shift to the new media of the digital landscape implies significant repercussions for the social practices of collective memory construction and the institutions designated as the keepers and curators of these memories - the cultural heritage industry.

Morris-Suzuki (2005) suggests that in our contemporary world we must consider that our knowledge of the past is increasingly coming just as much from the Internet and other forms of electronic media as it once did from the traditional narratives of history books. However, the argument is that the multiplicity of media

we increasingly rely on is not just about using them as a source of historical knowledge but equally as an experience, a sense of interactive presence that conveys a “relationship between past events, the people who record those events on film, and the viewer who sees, interprets and remembers the recorded images” (p. 156). This suggests that the fundamental difference is a shift from the sort of top-down, institutional explanations that have traditionally informed our historical knowledge to one that is reinterpreted through an encounter with various forms of media and molded by our interaction with them.

After all, websites now serve multiple roles as broadcast platforms, content aggregators, media archives, search engines, social networks, and hubs of specialized interest. At the same time, they can be accessed via home computer, personal laptops, digital readers, and cell phones. As such, Geil and Rabinovitz (2004) argue that the digitality of communication technologies should not be reduced to simple representational forms but that they must also be examined for their capacities to alter communicative practice, articulate social existence, and privilege perceptual knowledge.

Considering the technological boundaries and complex networks of digital culture increasingly being used to manage knowledge, Doueihy (2011) cautions that we should not privilege certain manifestations of intelligence simply because new technologies on the surface may seem incompatible with the operations of previous historical systems. Rather, Doueihy says, we should not be thinking of the changes brought on by the networked nature of the digital environment as either an issue of rupture or equivalence but instead as a continuous conversion of dynamic

associations in how digital memory could be activated:

The divide between traditional historical intellectual disciplines and the cultural realities of advanced technological and knowledge-based societies does not imply the possible loss or disappearance of the human factor or identity in the new digital reality. Instead, it invites us to reflect on the dynamic relations between culture and technology, and to think through current technological innovations and the social practices they make possible with the tools of cultural history. (Doueihi, 2011, p. xvi)

To recast this point of view, Doueihi is arguing that it is not about whether traditional repositories and archives are the same as digital archives but that the technological change toward digitality “has the potential to alter our historical perspective and to inform the ways in which we defined and understand the notion of a record, of historical record, and the narratives we will be able to produce about the events that determine our cultural history” (p. 122).

Examining the modern historical imagination and virtual memories through an analysis of historical video games, Fogu (2009) concludes that “the impact that digital technology is having on the whole field of historical production, from archives to textual and visual representations of history...may have already produced a reconfiguration of what we mean by ‘historical’ in the first place” (p. 106). In this way, our collective understanding of the past and historical meaning may increasingly be actively produced and afforded by the tools and texts of digital media.

Numerous treatises have been written about previous forms of media, such as photography and film, as providing rich documentary evidence, cultural constructions of reality, or established truths for the production of memory

(Brennen & Hardt, 1999; Grange, 2003), so why not apply the same critical questions toward the digital media as equally contingent on the social formation of memory? After all, every one of these “technologies of memory” (Landsberg, 2003) can now be indistinguishably circulated through the digital platforms of the Internet. In this way, “it is then through the inter-medial reiteration of the story across different platforms in the public arena (print, image, Internet, commemorative rituals) that the topic takes root in the community” (Erll & Rigney, 2009, p. 3). That is why Erll and Rigney argue, “the dynamics of [collective] memory has to be studied at the intersection of both social and medial processes” (p. 5).

Hoskins (2009) puts it this way, “the rapid rise in the role of social networking platforms in facilitating peer-directed connections and collectivities present potentially an array of new memory forms and cultures” (p. 30). So as the incarnations of memory begin to populate and become inextricably linked to the digital and social networks, a new ecology of memory practice is emerging that requires re-evaluation for the role of digital heritage institutions as mediators of these socio-technical systems. Once serving essentially as repositories or archives, memory institutions such as museums and libraries must now consider how to let their publics not only access information but contribute their own versions of meaning for the variety of heritage material and digital data that is now being preserved (Jakubowicz, 2009). These cultural heritage initiatives, projects, and institutions are increasingly content providers as much as conduits of cultural experience for enabling diverse groups of users to contribute their own cultural knowledge and production (Cameron, 2007).

It is this participative structure that loosens and redefines the “relations between communities and heritage institutions as mediated through technologies” (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007, p. 2). Whitcomb (2007) proposes that this shift will result in a new form of cultural heritage institution that is “an open, flexible institution, attentive to the needs of its audiences, rather than the remote, elite institution of old” (p. 37). By allowing the public to share its accounts of experience or meaning as a collective narrative through digital platforms, then, cultural heritage will no longer just be inviting visitors but “turning to electronic solutions as a platform from which to embrace a plurality of voices” (Hazan, 2007, p. 141). That is why Russo and Watkins (2007) argue “the cultural institution must seek to expand its curatorial mission from the exhibition of collections to the remediation of cultural narratives and experiences” (p. 149).

While the implementation of this form of community co-creation and engagement sounds democratizing and empowering, the question remains of what will happen to the institutions’ curatorial authority in providing expertise meaning and knowledge in a digital social environment that invites the community to contribute and imagine their own versions of what should be preserved and how it should be remembered. Parry (2007) proposes the relationship between cultural institutions and the public in memory construction is likely to reveal “something more reciprocal and complex” (p. 5). His primary point being that what was once treated as a narrative from cultural institutions is becoming something more like a conversation between heritage practitioners and the public.

Cameron and Robinson (2007) suggest that much like open-source

Wikipedia formats, cultural heritage institutions will come to serve as digital knowledge environments, which offer greater contextual possibilities, the inclusion of additional multimedia, new navigational pathways, and multiple narratives and meanings around collections. All of which, they say, “will continue to have major implications for the way in which collections information can be preserved, accessed, configured, and interpreted in the future” (p. 184).

What these arguments presuppose is that digital platforms do not just provide new presentational tools but also expand the complete experience with heritage collections, shifting the roles of heritage practitioners and participants in exploring new interpretations, as well as new forms of engagement with cultural artifacts. From this, we can assume at face value that digital heritage initiatives and programs entail “the entire series of productions that aspire to enhance, complement or substitute the experience of a site or object of historical and/or cultural significance, by making active use of digital computer technologies” (Bianchi, 2006, p. 449).

Confronted with these new modes of communication, increased interactivity, and capacity for expanded knowledge sharing, Besser (2007) similarly believes “information technology will cause broad changes in [cultural heritage] and in how the general public perceives cultural objects” (p. 165).

However, there are other implications for what this changing relationship with heritage collections through digital applications means not just for explanatory purposes but also in regards to our experience with the cultural heritage sites that house collections or are home to memorable events. Walsh (1992) worries that



among the possibilities posed to cultural heritage by these digital media we “run the risk of losing a sense of the past, or a sense of place...” (p. 60). Conversely, Parry (2010) argues that online activities and audiences are “as important as those physically onsite” (p. 1). The differences of position here suggest there remain questions of just how different cultural heritage is when experienced onsite as compared to a digital environment.

As we consider the connectivity afforded by digital media, then, we also need to reconsider the contextual possibilities both on location and in cyberspace, as well as “rethink the tangible and intangible imprints of our cultural history” (Miller, 2010, p. 296) in terms of how the experience is being altered, because the boundaries between are no longer so distinct. Or as Giaccardi (2012) makes abundantly clear, “The impact of social media and emerging cultures of participation on our understanding and experience of heritage is blurring” (p. 4).

### **SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY STUDIES**

If we are to consider the dynamic social exchange of and interaction with cultural heritage material through multimodal platforms, some of the main questions we must refer to the literature is how we encounter, conceptualize, and reference these digital representations of the past as well as attempt to define their potential to shape our collective memory. To do this, it is necessary to survey the evolution of memory studies and their evolving relationship to media technologies and digital practice.

Memory studies is a trans-disciplinary field that continues to exponentially

grow and evolve, despite the many challenges it faces both theoretically and methodologically. While more scholars are embracing the diverse field of memory studies, particularly in the area of media-memory discourses, the notion of memory as an object of study remains a challenging task because of the indistinct difference between individual, personal, physiological, and psychological concepts of memory, and those formations of collective, cultural or public memory that are considered to be primarily social constructs.

Because these distinctions are in some ways difficult to delineate as being mutually exclusive, the memory research that is discussed throughout this study does not focus on the particularities of personal, physiological, neurobiological, and psychological memories. The deliberate choice was made for this dissertation to not be concerned with memory retention, memory durability, nor its affective experience. I leave that to the capable interests of cognitive researchers. To be clear as possible, this dissertation is not interested in the trigger, the final memory, nor how widely shared a memory is in terms of collectivity. The purpose of this study is to consider those formations of collective, cultural and public forms of memory that have been widely examined through a broader sociological lens, what we do with them, how we relate, share or transfer digital memories, especially through our interactions with digital apparatuses and networks. This is a study that looks at functions, performances, and attitudes in the context of cultural forms and social practices integral to digital platforms in the process of remembrance.

Most of the literature that surveys the landscape of memory studies points to its origins in the 1920s as having first been articulated by Maurice Halbwachs

(1980[1950]), a former student of sociologist Emile Durkheim, when he coined the term “collective memory” (Hume, 2010; Erll, 2011). Expanding on Durkheim’s notion of “social facts,” or social behaviors and rituals that could be observed and studied to better understand a culture’s values and social cohesion, Halbwachs thought it equally possible that a culture’s memory could be analyzed as a function of its social life (Halbwachs, 1950). In other words, by looking at how a society selects and reinterprets certain structural events and behaviors through social interaction and communication it would be possible to determine how that society passes on knowledge and beliefs from generation to generation. This first iteration of collective memory also made clear that the reconstructive aspect of memory is always a matter of understanding the past in the present through social articulation and interaction.

Halbwachs had introduced the idea of collective memory as a process of social interaction, where cultural attention, knowledge, and beliefs were transmitted through the communication and institutional thinking of realms such as family, religion, and even social class. Or, as explained by Erll and Rigney (2009), the very notion of collective memory “is itself premised on the idea that memory can only become collective as part of a continuous process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts [sic] that mediate between individuals and, in the process, create communality across both space and time” (p. 1).

Thus, our collective memories are based on the discursive practices and narrative processes of sharing recollections, so that each generation would have some understanding about how to think of historical events, groups, traditions, and

social behaviors. Halbwachs also argued that though a kernel of the original collective memory would remain as it was disseminated across generations, the memory would also be inexorably altered and changed according to the prerogatives and needs of the time in which it was remembered. This means that each generation will continue to alter past accounts to suit its present needs and understanding, or perhaps focus on what they think is important because of contemporary dilemmas or situations.

Another iteration of early memory studies came from Aby Warburg, who was articulating his own version of what he called “social memory” by looking at the material function of art in conveying social understanding of the past (Rampley, 2000). Warburg did this by examining symbols that were used in art across eras, styles, and even communities. He showed that certain artistic symbols were used and later re-used in various time periods in ways that showed social meaning could, over time, be transmitted or re-contextualized through the conventions and symbols of art.

The lineage of memory scholarship eventually extended into broader categories of inquiry beyond the strictly communicative process or even the art world. Pierre Nora (1989) expanded this potential for examining memory by considering what he called “lieux de memoire” (sites of memory). Nora’s sites of memory included the possibility for looking at memorials, artifacts, texts, and other commemorative practices within French society to see how a national identity could be formed.

Connorton (1989) made the case that societies remember in many ways that

are not just textual or physical and that it is important to broaden our understanding beyond the artifacts, sites, or physical memorials. As much of the research in memory studies focuses on the locations, objects, communities, and forms that result in collective memories, Connorton asserted that more consideration is still necessary in dealing with the social practice, rituals, and social construction that should necessarily be a part of the shaping of collective memory. Such a notion serves as an important cue for this research project as the aim is to evaluate the social practices involved in constructing memories through interaction with multimodal platforms in digital heritage.

Jan Assman (1995) developed a more nuanced version of memory with his notion of “cultural memory,” in which meaning and relevance about the past is derived as a function of socialization, particularly through the media. Assman’s cultural memory both extended the previous considerations of collective and social memory and provided more specific definitions. For example, Assman specified the difference between what he called “cultural memory” and “communicative memory.” The communicative memory is an everyday, short-term, informal way to spread information between speakers, such as local lore or oral histories. Cultural memory, he posited, is much more significant because it includes more long-term, institutionalized forms of communication that also include the media.

He also clarified the difference between cultural memory forms that were “functional” versus those that are “stored.” What this means is that stored memories in the forms of texts, for instance, could be waiting in archives, libraries, or other repositories, and their potential is to become useful memories once they are

rediscovered, whereas functional memories are those that are in circulation or institutionalized to the point that they are referred to regularly. Because of Assman's specificity and inclusion of particular media forms as being applicable objects for studying memory construction, his cultural memory articulation is often referred to as the nexus of media-memory discourses and provides further mortar for the foundations of this current project.

However, many scholars have looked more closely at the potential for the media and its representations to be considered primary transmitters and shapers of cultural memory, giving more attention to the role the media play in framing, constructing, and transmitting these mediated memories in our contemporary, increasingly media-saturated society. Dayan and Katz (1992), Edgerton and Rollins (2001), Grange (2003), Fogu (2009), and Monaci and Tirocchi (2010) all similarly concluded that television, film, live broadcasts, and, to a certain degree, even video games have a significant impact on our collective memory, primarily because many of us remember learning about significant events through the media or saw them televisually simulated.

Another strong focus in memory studies deals with how societies translate national or cultural traumas through various practices of memorialization and commemoration. Zelizer (1992) and Shudson (1992) examined the role the media play in conveying national traumas and events such as the Kennedy assassination and the Watergate scandal, respectively. The implications are that an increasing amount of our cultural and historical experience is being absorbed through media practices and presentations, such as journalism and television broadcasts. Levy

(1999) contributed to the field of memory studies with his version of “global memory” that used the Holocaust as a worldwide memory of commemoration to explain that certain memories not only need not be geographically specific but that the overarching significance of the event and media technologies allow for more people to share in its consequences through a wide variety of audiovisual materials, artifacts, and presentational contexts. As such, the media not only play the role of agenda-setting to what society should consider to be important, but it is the mediated representation that provides much of society access to events beyond their own experience. So while these media productions may in some ways provide windows for viewing past events, it cannot go unnoticed that the media institutions that produce them also direct our attentions and frame our viewpoints.

However, Sporrel (2010) looked at the national calamity of the Great Depression through the photographs of Dorothea Lange and argued that, over time, media representations such as photographs can convey cultural memories as much as the knowledge can be altered to fit the prerogatives of the time. Thus, much like Halbwachs’ assertion, Sporrel’s position is that with each generation who views them, they will see a meaning that is constructed by the issues and frames of their own times. This serves as a reminder that even national events of trauma can eventually have their meaning changed, even if the viewer can observe them through the lens of a moment captured in time.

These studies can also sometimes be situated in physical memorials or monuments, such as the Holocaust Museum or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and how they transmit cultural knowledge about specific tragedies. However, many

studies have also been applied to media events without specific locations that serve as transmitters of cultural memory, such as the media coverage of the Challenger shuttle explosion, which is commemorated most through the repetition of audiovisual or photographic playback and display. Increasingly, sites of trauma and tragedy are a combination of both physical and televisual presence. The most prominent example is the 9/11 images of the Twin Towers burning or collapsing, which is as much of a mediated collective memory as it is a physical site of remembrance at Ground Zero in New York City's lower Manhattan.

However, even the role the media play in memory construction has undergone further revision with the digital revolution. In the next section, we turn our attentions away from the significant role the mass media institutions play in constructing collective memory and focus instead on a growing body of scholarly research that considers the ramifications of the more participatory digital media as discursive sites of memory formation.

#### **AT THE INTERSECTION OF NEW MEDIA AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

The participatory environment enabled by the Internet, mobile communication technologies, and digital platforms suggests that the process of memory formation is changing through a multiplicity of media and functions. In other words, the consequence of the more participatory elements of the digital platforms means that we are no longer simply sharing in traditional mass media events. We are increasingly generating our own digital content, creating our own media events, and sharing them among ourselves.



Consider for a moment what this means for the cultural heritage industry and the reconstructive nature of memory because much of the user-generated content increasingly being made available can be attributed to the technological convergence of the digital age. It is content that is now recorded from such devices as cell phones, webcams, or high-definition hand-held digital cameras and video recorders that is then uploaded, viewed, tagged, shared, or commented on by its networked community and beyond. This content is then found, shared, streamed, and accessed across a wide variety of social media portals (think Facebook and Twitter to name only two), search engines, and digital devices like iPads, tablets, and smart phones.

That is why with every bit of data uploaded, downloaded, or shared, Internet users are interacting with and being informed by digital representations of the past, often using them for managing and preserving memories (Monaci & Tirocchi, 2010). In this way, Lange (2009) describes how personal ephemera and experience can now practically be uploaded as part of the collective memory. She points out that “the rise of the Internet and YouTube have changed distribution options from that of small-scale home-mode viewing to global sharing and exchange” (p. 74). Lange also posits that by sharing in informal experiences of similar interest through a mediated exchange, viewers create, experience, and participate in social relationships with cultural and material circumstances because of their communicative orientation.

As these types of visual representations are shared online, then, it lends new imperatives for determining how these representations affect an audience’s relationship to the past. It is possible that society’s very memory is indeed being

influenced by the technical simulations of user-generated content that increasingly constitute our historical experience online. While audiovisual representations do not necessarily render evidence of historical fact, they can provide visibility and referential value to certain recorded moments (Baer, 2001).

To further substantiate this point, a robust body of research is emerging that tries to address the digital technologies as “vehicles of memory” and “the importance of new media in shaping our contemporary remembrance culture” (Haskins, 2007, p. 401). According to Hume (2010, p. 187), “These mediated memory artifacts recorded by individuals provide a place to consider the nature of collective history and memory.” What most of this research shows is that the participatory engagement of recording, selecting, and sharing user-generated digital content is leading to a new intersection of technology and memory that positions the audience as active participants in the mediating process.

Sak (2011) proposes just such a relationship between new media and collective memory through the sharing of cultural texts, experience, and information. The contention is that video-sharing sites such as YouTube constitute networks of people and videos that construct a community of shared interests in cyberspace. By sorting, viewing, tagging, and commenting on videos, users are determining the significance of videos, “the raw material of the memory” (p. 99), which makes it possible to relocate and articulate the community’s recollection of a specific collective memory. In this way, because social media and cultural heritage sites can offer visual evidence of significant historical events and other cultural forms, they are becoming portals of cultural memory that preserve, reinforce, and

reconstruct existing collective memories through content-sharing.

Sa (2009) argues that the digital forms of Web 2.0 technologies can also make for new types of shared awareness because these tools of recording and updating the historical past can also guide future memory and identity. Thus, he sees a strong relationship between memory production and these cultural technologies because they become instruments of reminiscence and mnemonic aids for mediating memories and subjective experience in digital form.

His argument is supported by his assertion that human culture has been radically transformed by the new technological environment and proliferation of wireless mobile devices, which expand the scope of private space into the public arena with expanding horizons. His point is that as more people share and exchange their podcasts, videocasts, and photoblogs, the more people are sharing their own “shoebox of memories” (p. 5) as digital objects with multiple dimensions for framing the past in new multisensory ways.

This, in turn, creates new ways of socializing, experiencing, and sharing personal and public memories, where they can be fixed and revisited in new forms of cultural practice that allow for reinterpretation and reorganization. Supporting this view are several studies that discuss just how much of our own personal and social experiences are being recorded and uploaded to websites and through social media applications, presenting a strong case that consumer-driven content is driving both production and demand. Smith (2009) points out that user-generated videos have become the largest growing platform of social media online and that content which “focused on users’ personal lives outpaced all professional content”

(p. 559). Or as Carnaby and Sutherland (2009) make clear in their argument for the preservation of citizen-created digital content, “There is at present an extraordinary unleashing of content created by individual citizens” (p. 1).

Once these interactive, personalized media are shared as cultural texts, repeatedly, they have the potential to reconfigure our memory of things past and “the meanings suggested by these images” (Savoie, 2010). The broader implications are that individual memories shared through user-generated, digital content can then become public, and ultimately shape our collective recollections through cultural practice and digital mediation (Brockmeier, 2010).

Unlike the traditional transmission model of media production, social media platforms and applications allow users to generate their own content, which provides a more participatory, bottom-up model where “everyone has the ability to contribute as well as consume” (Hartley, 2008, p. 6). The productivity of this system, he points out, is a complex form of digital literacy with an enabling social technology and open channel of mutual influence that feeds a larger cultural network of interaction. Grinell (2009) also sees a blurring between the roles of producer and consumer in the more participatory Web 2.0 environment. She examines the transition from the portal of the early Internet, where people simply accessed information, to the platforms of Web 2.0 and beyond, where users now contribute and produce content.

Stiegler (2009) says that the development of digital audiovisual technology both disrupts the traditional transmission model of the cultural industries and transforms the way viewers can navigate audiovisual programs by uploading their

own content, as well as by freezing, slowing down, rewinding, or fast forwarding images. In other words, Stiegler indicates that user accessibility to audiovisual content is delinearized because they now can manipulate the pathways, as well as produce tags, keywords, indexations, and annotations, which forges in new media users a greater degree of agency than traditional mass media audiences have had.

From these perspectives, it is this bottom-up hierarchy that will allow succeeding generations to contribute and transmit their own stories to be watched, categorized, and understood. In doing so, the collective memory that is constructed is that of the actual participants, rather than forged by the cultural heritage field simply for consumption.

Another line of available research rethinks the function of these consumer-driven digital websites as offering an improved model for archiving because of the ease of access, navigation, and what evidence is chosen for preservation. Carnaby (2009) considers the economic, social and cultural impact of what people are deleting and archiving in the digital environment. For her, the issue is about digital curation and how to manage this citizen-created content for preservation. In this capacity, while she wonders what is being lost and who is making that decision, she also acknowledges that the users themselves are determining their own pathways for what they hope to find and have more control over what to preserve.

Gehl (2009) examines the technical structure of YouTube as an archive that democratizes archival technologies because of its lack of curatorial authority, with the use or exchange value of its content mediated by the audience. Gehl points out that the media objects of YouTube are “potential cultural memory stored in the

memory banks of YouTube's servers" (p. 46), and that "when it comes to accessioning and classifying, the users of YouTube are the true curators of this archive" (p. 47). While he is focusing primarily on YouTube, the implications for any form of digital archive in the cultural heritage industry using multimodal platforms to engage their publics is equally clear. The capabilities of Web 2.0 and beyond are giving the users more flexibility and control over content.

Gehl stakes this claim on the ability of users to title, tag, or describe the digital content, which can serve as prosthetic cultural memories for retrieval and exhibition. "Collectively, users could also decide what broadcast media objects should be saved...it would be a place where the collective intelligence of large groups of people would determine what media objects are preserved and, through comment function, how they are interpreted" (p. 48). So for Gehl, the importance of YouTube is not that memories are collected per se, but in how these cultural memories are arranged, selected, and featured and the particular narrative they are constructing. This fact also highlights the issue of how digital cultural artifacts are saved and classified. Gehl also argues that traditional digital archives could model their own collections after YouTube's archiving.

Kalnikaite and San Pedro (2008) argue that mobile video devices have immense potential as personal memory tools and immersive memory prosthesis. One of their main points is that more than simply the collection and sharing of Web-based content, the ability to retrieve, categorize, tag, and manage key points of social events allows for the construction of shared memory cues, which will allow audiovisual summaries that can augment human memory.

Soukup (2010) argues that certain memorialized mediated texts, particularly those that are an intertextual pastiche devoid of any narrative form, function as a public memory and that “reminiscing about our mediated recent past has become a staple of contemporary popular culture” (p. 76). In this context, Soukup claims the implications of certain public memories or historical remembrances are that they provide viewers identity and pleasure, where the audience can “construct meanings based upon their memories of popular cultural texts...and culturally situated knowledge of the history of comparable images” (p. 81). In other words, it is not so much the text that has meaning, but rather its intertextuality provides viewers the means to situate themselves and their subjective experience against other media texts.

For Soukup, then, the postmodern history is less about “rigorous, narrative-driven historical truth” and more about “endless simulation of reality (rather than re-presentation of reality) via image-based media” (p. 87). As such, Soukup argues we are immersed in an economy of attention and that public memory is largely about communal understanding of the past, where “viewers are active participants in the process as they are filling in meanings with their unique memories/knowledge of media texts” (p. 89).

In their analysis of digital media, Monaci and Tirocchi (2010) present the hypothesis that specialized memories are produced as temporal cultural expressions in these new media environments and that the ability to archive, annotate, appropriate, and re-circulate this digitized information allows for the construction of communicative memory and cultural consumption. Thus, these new

communication technologies mediate historical events, as well as cultural and individual memory. In particular, Monaci and Tirocchi found that the memory of younger people is directly elaborated by and connected to these media technologies of memory. Put another way, our current memories are increasingly intertwined with and informed by our interaction with media technologies.

Another strong current of research highlights the capacity for the multimedia of video sharing to produce new audiences. In their research design, Multisilta and Milrad (2009) focused on the increasing trend of people using mobile devices to post blog notes, images and video clips as a way to create a “shared felt experience” (p. 2). In other words, the digital media content that people are publishing of their own lives through social mobile media are mediating their experience through technology, which constructs shared meaning among communities. This can in turn create and maintain social relationships, construct personal and group memory, as well as deal with self-presentation and self-expression. As mobile users create and share larger volumes of digital content, then, social mobile media enable them to involve others in their own experience.

Other scholars attempt to explain how viewers derive or construct meaning from the ways in which they use the media technology. For instance, Uricchio (2009) insists that the user-generated content “has informed our understanding of media history, shaping our historical agenda and the questions we put the past” (p. 25). He argues that these data generated by users rupture our understanding of the past, privilege historical moments, and allow viewers to recontextualize our ways of thinking about moving-image content. Not only does Uricchio think this user-



generated material destabilizes the traditional production of the media industries but the on-demand aspect of this content through recommendation, annotation, and prompts can “provide broader space where social meaning and cultural value take form” (p. 35).

Similarly, van Dijck (2008) argues that while watching a video production, viewers construct meaning and become aware of mediated memories based on social codes, cultural contexts, and cognitive philosophical processes. It is here, she explains, where memory, cultural forms, images, and technical forms converge to construct a version of memory that we already recognize because of how we condition ourselves to derive meaning from our viewing practices. Hebert (2008) argues that the Internet allows for even more memorial sites to be created in a digital realm, where more can visit and share without having to go to a physical place, and more forms of commemorative presentation are possible. In this way, even the process of memorializing is no longer driven by location but is instead becoming more personalized and tailored to individual needs.

However, Savoie (2010) and LeMahieu (2011) both warn that this media transmission of memory is increasingly sent out in fragments or shown out of its original context, which could have significant implications for how we as a society reflect on our own past, pass on historical knowledge, or share collective memories because of their haphazard articulation in a digital environment. Another way to consider this is that while audiences have the potential to share and exchange their experiences, inherently creating collective memories, the digital platforms of content sharing also have the potential to segment audiences because the delivery

of memory production is more niche or interest oriented. Even this perspective, though, could be seen as putting the onus on the viewers to become more thoroughly aware of the context from which they retrieve digital artifacts.

Another problematic conceptualization comes from Hoskins (2009). While Hoskins accepts the transformative power of the immersion of memory in the digital age, he also warns that for all the storage potential and thoughts of permanency, the sociotechnical practices for how we use the Internet make these evidences vulnerable, which in turn threatens the longevity of our digital “productions of memory and the data used to forge history” (p. 9).

Put another way, unlike the hard copies of traditional cultural artifacts, Hoskins also points out that the technology we use today to access the data of emails, text-messages, and social networking sites may not be available in the future, which means that our cultural memory is at the whim of the technologies we use to preserve and rediscover it. While such technological limitations of recall are true of every generation, Hoskins makes the point that digital data is particularly susceptible to being lost when he writes, “Thus the images made of and in everyday life that will shape tomorrow’s personal and public memory, are vulnerable to the shifts in today’s sociotechnical practices enabled through the highly fluid, transferable and erasable memory-matter of digital data” (p. 12). So while there may be numerous advantages in a digital environment for data retrieval and recollection, we must also consider that Web-based information should at the same time be considered impermanent evidence given the rapid pace of technological innovation and obsolescence.

However, all of these examples represent a perspective that both situates and privileges the viewer between the digital media and collective memory. Thus, the way audiences encounter and understand the past through mediated experience also has a great deal to do with the personal meanings they bring to their viewing, a complex discursive practice that gives the audience more agency in constructing meaning and public memory. All told, however, this point of view is much more concerned with how users construct meaning rather than the digital data itself. As these interactive technologies continue to function as digital memories, then, it is increasingly important to delve into what types of digital cultural heritage are considered constitutive of collective memory, including how they are shaped through remediation, how practices are reconfigured, and increasingly who decides what we will choose to remember.

### **RECYCLING CULTURAL HERITAGE ARTIFACTS INTO DIGITAL MEMORIES**

Before we can begin to investigate new forms of digital memory as practice, it is first necessary to provide context for what types of representations are implicated in the transmission of cultural heritage in a digital culture. The tangible artifacts, once the hallmark of cultural production that adorned museum walls or lined the shelves of archives, are now increasingly being copied, replaced by, or repurposed into digital expressions, representations, and simulations. To encounter these digital forms, then, involves the fundamental issue that was once bits and pieces of material substance in cultural heritage is now just as frequently encoded data. Even the intangible aspects of cultural heritage – the oral traditions, the rituals,

and other performative enactments – are being converted to digital files of audiovisual representation. While they may be comparable versions of the past, it must be highlighted that the central feature of digitization involves remediation, a theoretical concept formalized by Bolter and Grusin (1996), which describes the confluence of one form of media being re-presented in some other form, in either technical, representational, or cultural terms, so that it is “experienced in a fundamentally new way” (Livingstone, 2012).

According to Bolter and Grusin, the logic behind remediation is that media forms can be borrowed, incorporated, re-used, redefined, or redeployed in new combinations that either build or rely on the previous instantiations, but ultimately change the application or experience. When considering forms of digital cultural heritage, the primary conceptualization is that this digital material has already been remediated, if not in form, then in function or presentation. This relationship is further made clear by Geil and Rabinovitz (2004), when they posit that, “Another way that history often comes into play in discussions of digital culture is through the idea of remediation. That is, that new technologies, media in particular, always reinscribe what was already present in previous technologies” (pp. 3-4).

The interactivity of automated action dealing with a digital interface lends itself to a certain logic that is at once mediated and representative of other media. In the digital domain, the act of representation is already re-presenting existing forms of media in a multiplicity of, and often overlapping, functions, spaces, and applications. This is true online whether it be in the case of artifacts from heritage collections being digitized, being reproduced from tangible object to immaterial

data with a certain degree of verisimilitude, to digital-born material that still relies on previous media forms like audio, photography, or video to be represented.

The remediation process is not just a matter of type of media form either, it also entails new formulations of access, presence, performance, or application. Imagine, for example, how different the experience might be to view a masterpiece painting on the wall of a major metropolitan museum in person versus viewing it on a digital tablet or a smart phone while sitting in your car during rush hour traffic. The argument here is not to say that one experience is comparatively better than the other but rather that the essence of the encounter would be intrinsically remediated by digitality so as to provide a fundamentally different interpretive experience. While many might argue a preference for acquiring cultural meaning through real-world, offline bodily experience, the legitimacy of gaining perceptual knowledge from either material or digitally mediated production is not at stake here. Again, which object as commodity we prefer to fetishize is not really the point that is being made. Rather, it is that digitality itself produces new, remediated modes of how the public can experience cultural heritage, including how they contextualize, value, perceive, or even historicize these digital traces.

This concept of remediated experience is why Bolter and Grusin argue that digital interfaces redefine “representational practice” and “cultural logic” (p. 8). To them, the process of remediation is not just about new mediums being used to make content more appealing, it is also about “creating a more complex system in which iconic and arbitrary forms of representation interact” (p. 9) and “is a concept that applies to media in their simultaneous character as objects, as social relationships,

and as formal structures” (p. 24). As such, rather than focus our attention simply on the technological forms constructed in a digital environment, we should instead be thinking of remediation equally as a transition in social practice for how we navigate the boundaries of digital heritage.

According to Frost (2010), the new forms of social practice these technologies allow for include more collaborative opportunities for participatory creation, where “a user may decide to add context to a work, reconfigure it, and use for a different purpose” (p. 240). In other words, the technological turn toward digital platforms can enhance social interaction through its reproducibility. Russo and Watkins (2007) also argue that this remediated network allows for audiences to be “both the reader and the producer,” providing an experience that “plays an active role in the remediation of knowledge” (p. 161). What this means is that it is not just about how different the digital representation is, or where we might experience it, but also what can be done with it.

The strategy of cultural heritage institutions providing broader access and interactivity with their collections of cultural production through digital platforms and networks also suggests that we are collapsing the temporal distance between our recorded past and our present activities. While the discrepancy between the supposed “then” and “now” may seem difficult to logically reconcile, the argument has been made that the act of recalling is always in the present, which means that every interaction with a representational object involves “immediacy as being in the presence of media” (Grusin & Bolter, 1996, p. 23). According to Russo and Watkins (2007), “In this way, the cultural institution acts as a continuously remediated

environment, posing questions of immediacy and hyperreality, enabling audiences to ‘make meaning’ and draw their notions of reality from access to the remediating network” (p. 155).

Taking this logic one step further, by implying that digital technologies are redefining the objects, associations, structures of meaning, and social practices that we use to consider the past through digital heritage, we are literally remediating the ways in which we remember. If this is the case, the question then becomes, ‘where is the locus of control that determines not just *how* evidence of the past is remembered but who decides *what* is actually remembered?’

#### **GATEKEEPING DIGITAL MEMORIES**

Initially formulated by psychologist Kurt Lewin (1943), and quickly applied to journalism as a guiding principle by David Manning White (1950), the conceptual framework of gatekeeping theory posits that news stories are inhibited or promoted by the subjective and routine decisions of media professionals, in terms of selectivity of which stories are chosen to construct social reality and newsworthiness of coverage (Cassidy, 2006). In subsequent studies it was determined these choices are often guided by professional norms, standards, and pressures, indicating that the organizational influences, routines, and processes are just as important as the individuals making the decisions (Roberts, 2005). However, more than simply making decisions about what information is presented, another crucial component of the gatekeeping theory is that the professionals making those decisions also must have oversight or control over the channels of distribution. In

essence, their control over the channel means control over the information.

Since Lewin's first iteration of gatekeeping, which Roberts (2005) calls little more than a descriptive framework that summarizes how decisions are made with little, if any, predictive power, the theory has repeatedly been applied as a foundation to mass communication research and has received renewed interest with the advent of the Internet. The reason for this is that the participatory nature of Web 2.0 allows for the rewriting of access codes, providing entry for nearly everyone as a producer of information to the formerly restricted, gated community of media institutions. Considering this analysis and interpretation, the same interest toward curatorial authority, of controlling the flow of information, can be similarly applied to the role of cultural heritage professionals in a digital environment.

While much attention has been given over the years to the physical or situated places where memories could ostensibly reside – the archives, museums, repositories, and other cultural heritage institutions that are charged with the preservation, exhibition, and curation of cultural production – among the concerns that have been raised in relation to these sites is the hierarchical administration that these institutions represent in collecting and distributing cultural material. Equally important, then, are the practitioners who are in charge of the transmission of cultural memories. In fact, it could be argued that the narrative of cultural memory is shaped by who is in charge of access to the cultural production from previous generations.

What and how something should be remembered has long been the domain of heritage practitioners, according to their own narratives, interpretations, and



versioning practices. The traditional signifying process for understanding the past has involved the structures and imperatives of cultural heritage organizations, whose introverted focus privileged their own collections and explanations. By this it is meant that art historians, curators, librarians, and archivists have all been the gatekeepers of our collective and cultural memories. They are the ones who traditionally collect, manage, store, and provide access to the resources and artifacts of cultural production, and for much of the past, “curatorship gave primacy to the materiality of objects” (Parry, 2007, p. 68). As such, cultural heritage collections were often reduced to and contained by the limitations of physical space and institutional thinking. Although, while “the main functions of heritage is the preservation and exhibition of curiosities, with the monuments as a tangible expression of permanence and historical authority” (Flynn, 2007, p. 349), it is the cultural heritage practitioners who provide the authority on authenticity, significance, explanation, and what should be privileged. They filter and extract meaning, explaining to society what should be preserved, conveyed, and recalled, and their choices carry the weight of their expertise and their narratives exhibit established priorities.

However, some researchers are now rethinking the digital aspect of how memories can be curated, preserved, and disseminated in ways that are not so fixed to material artifacts, a particular location or community, or even necessarily restricted to the traditional notions of curatorial authority. Cameron and Robinson (2007) propose, “A shift from the predominant use of highly prescribed authored information, text-based descriptions, and significance statements to a greater

inclusion of interpretive materials around selected significant objects will involve new curatorial roles” (p. 185). They suggest that curators will become more like “experience brokers” that provide less of an overarching explanation and instead “become more involved in bringing together and linking forms of evidence” according to “user contexts and preferences” (p. 185).

Additionally, as heritage organizations devise digital mechanisms and platforms that allow for more public participation with their collections, there appears to be potential for the public to be situated more prominently in the production of meaning and possibly in the privileging of their own materials and interpretations. As Walsh (2010) explains, “On the World Wide Web, anyone can be a museum curator or art historian, promoting his or her own view of the meaning of art, borrowing images from museum Web sites, from hundreds of other sources on the Web, or scanning them on cheap equipment attached to their computers” (p. 31). Without getting too mired in the ongoing debate of the merits between professional expertise and populist appeal, it can be sufficiently argued here that as the public gains more prominence as producers of meaning in cultural heritage through digital platforms, they will also be changing their subjectivity, pursuing their own interests and providing their own interpretations, rather than solely relying on the explanation of cultural heritage specialists. Or as Cameron and Robinson (2007) put it, “Here, the user is conceived as a spatial wanderer, traversing information and freely selecting trajectories and viewpoints, rather than a ‘passive,’ directed observer” (p. 179).

As more media-memory discourses have considered what a digital network

society means for communicating cultural memories, there is growing agreement that the Internet and the related functions of social media present a host of new opportunities for members of society to share in its experience and add their own voices to the mix.

The amplification of the cacophony of voices that digital media allowed for, the potential loss of editorial control that they appeared to encourage, and the increased mutability of content that they seemed to support, were all at odds with the clarity and authority of the curator's prized authorship. The variability of new media (epitomised in the un-moderated user-generated content of the Internet) seemed to sit as counterpoint to some entrenched practices of curatorial authority and control. (Parry, 2007, p. 109)

What this implies is that the gatekeeping process of who decides what is collected, saved, and contextualized for our collective memory is less constrained by a handful of institutional specialists in a multimodal, networked environment. Broader participation by the public in these decisions could in fact mean a wider selection of what constitutes cultural heritage artifacts and, more significantly, a more varied interpretation of what these items might mean for our recollections. If anyone can now contribute and share their perspective of a past event or object through a variety of digital platforms, then whole new layers of interpretation will be fostered through social interaction and discussion.

For instance, rather than relying entirely on a brochure or placard on a museum wall to explain an exhibit, visitors can now use multimodal platforms to confer their own knowledge, perspective, or even memories to expand the public's understanding beyond that provided solely by the institutional version. Cameron and Robinson (2007) explain that, "In these ways, digital technology challenges the

notion of a singular, fixed, homogenous, and authoritative museum voice and lends greater legitimacy to multiple interpretations of objects and the collections where they reside” (p. 178).

This notion that the increasing connectivity of society through networked systems of the digital media, the Internet, and mobile technologies should promote the capacity for society to share even more of its experience and, thus, create more shared memories, is shared by a number of media-memory scholars (Erll, 2009; Falci, 2011; Neiger, 2011; Pentzold & Sommer, 2011; Sa, 2009). The argument has also been made that the production of collective memory through social interaction and communication can forge communities, reveal identities, and allow for more democratization as more voices participate in the process of memory formation (Geil, 2004; Haskins, 2007; Olick, 1998; Van Dijk, 2008). In examining how technology allows for more interaction and participation, there would seem to be broad agreement, then, that collective memory is no longer restricted to the official narratives, and those oppressed groups who have been historically neglected increasingly have an opportunity to have their own stories added to the narrative from their own point of view.

While this may be true, however, the focus should not just be on the fact that more people can provide their own perspectives and explanations. There must also be some consideration given to what happens in the interactive and participatory digital media environment when members of the public are given the capability to also contribute their own *experience* by sharing their own user-generated, digital content.

Not only, as Brockmeier (2010) suggests, will we see an expansion of access to new varieties of memories through networked systems, the choices of what we remember will increasingly be driven by our own personal interests. By looking at mobile phones and Facebook as being new forms of personal archives, Reading (2009) and Garde-Hansen (2009), respectively, make the point that individuals can now simply record, keep track of, and share what they consider to be memorable events and digitally make them available to their own communities of interest instead of relying on the cultural heritage industry to signify what we should think is important. This autonomy and agency is important to consider, according to Besser (1997), who says, “The widespread dissemination of networked digital information from the cultural arena is likely to have a similar effect on other forms of culture, moving them into personal spaces where the user asserts more control over how quickly and when the interaction takes place” (p. 154).

In other words, the digital capacity to record, save, and share personal memories with their own cultural constituents forces us to reconsider the future of, need for, or roles played by institutional archives, repositories, and cultural heritage organizations. Jones-Garmil (1997) portended this concern with a high degree of prescience by predicting even before the introduction of the more interactive Web 2.0 capacities that, “The coming model of communication will no longer require that a relatively small cadre of content providers determine the information streams” (p. 24).

Despite the democratizing potential of the Internet, however, Geil (2004) cautions that there is still the likelihood that commercial, governmental, and

institutional structures will continue to dominate the communicative articulation of society's memory for some time to come. That is why it is essential to examine how the roles and functions of cultural heritage institutions as gatekeepers of collective memory are being transformed in a multimodal, digital environment, so we can better understand which voices will be most prominent in the future articulation of how we remember the past.

### **REMEDIATING THE SOCIAL IN THEORY**

While I have attempted to link this study to the theories of collective memory/media-memory discourse, remediation, and gatekeeping, at the heart of this research is also an examination of the transformation in social practice that is occurring in the digital realm, with a particular emphasis on memory practices through multimodal platforms and applications. The theories previously mentioned help to ground this research in regards to the effects these media forms and texts have on our memory (collective memory/media-memory discourse), the shape and composition of these media texts (remediation), and who directs the channels of production and distribution of these texts (gatekeeping). However, the argument has been made that what needs further exploration are the social practices that surround these texts – the social orders, situated interaction, operational procedures, and conceptual definitions of practice – that occur and are produced through social contexts, social conventions, and social constructs. In other words, another significant strand of theory informing this research must also be able to account for cultural expression, behavior, and production by observing social

practice through the mediated lens of digital platforms, tools, and technologies.

To do this, I borrow several conceptual categories from a multiplicity of social theories that I believe provide a promising framework for studying multimodal participation in a digital context and networked environment. The primary conceptualization is that understanding the participatory and collaborative elements of these digital platforms requires a closer look at the social behaviors and practices they enable that position the public as more active and participatory producers of meaning in the construction of memory through digital interfaces and multimodal platforms. As such, I have chosen elements derived from several social theories that focus their gaze most intently on the production of meaning by actors through their interaction with symbols and representations of social action. The social theories that I glean from include art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories.

According to Kellner (1995), social theories are maps of societal fields that allow individuals to familiarize and situate themselves within the environment for how their societies are constructed through structures, institutions, and perhaps most importantly, social relations. In other words, we come to better understand how a society is shaped and functions by observing how people conduct themselves as social beings, through their collective practices and social interactions. The social theories that have been selected for this dissertation each suggest that society can be understood through its experience with mediated products and allow for the critical analysis of the construction of meaning through social conditions, social behavior, social relations, and social interaction.

In general terms, social theory derives its foundational concepts from a variety of fields of study in the social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, history, and political science. Early iterations of examining social practice as evidence of social cohesion, meaning, and structure came from Durkheim (1895), who coined the term “social facts” to describe social behavior that could be observed to provide further explanation of how a culture or society articulated its beliefs and organization. James (1892) and Mead (1929) also articulated the concept of the social self, which considers how individuals develop a sense of self within the collective society based on encounters with others as part of social processes.

These were profound notions that laid that groundwork for studying societies through social behavior as an object of study. Anthropologists Boas (1920), Malinowski (1922), and Radcliffe-Brown (1940) advanced this understanding of social theory even further by arguing the importance of examining each particular culture in its own setting, in relation to its own social conditions, and according to its own social practices. Their milestone accounts also considered the expanded dimension of ethnographic study through field and participatory observations of social practice.

In other examples of locating new realms for understanding social behavior, Habermas (1991) articulated an arrangement of what he called the “public sphere,” a socially constructed position that allowed for the exchange of ideas and behaviors to counteract the dominant ideology of a society’s structural institutions. Put another way, Habermas was arguing that to truly understand a society’s mindset it was better not to look at socially proscribed behaviors but rather it would be more



revealing to see how and where members of a society were resisting institutional thinking and requirements. Williams (1981) also introduced a novel approach for studying societies and their behaviors by proposing the study of cultural production as the best measure. In this way, Williams set the focus on the arts, popular culture, and other forms of cultural production as indicators of meaning construction within a society. Combined, both Habermas and Williams were re-orienting the conceptual categories for studying social practice away from only the official, institutionalized, or traditional to now include the radical, the popular, and the more creative practices in which members of society would engage.

Kellner (1995) introduced what he calls “media culture,” an explanatory conceptualization that allows for researchers to examine how audiences produce social meaning through their interaction with media products. His argument is not that media texts are simply the embodiment of dominant ideology injected into the public by media institutions, propositions often associated with the critical perspectives of Gramsci’s (1999) idea of hegemony, Adorno and Horkheimer’s (2002) notion of the culture industry, and Althusser’s (2006) articulation of ideology, but are instead an interactive process of meaning construction between the content providers, the audience, the media text, and the social environment in which they all exist. From Kellner’s perspective, it is more important to understand the entire social process and milieu from which media texts are produced and interacted with, not just whether the encoded symbol is adequately translated and understood. What emerges from this point of view is that society can increasingly be understood through its experience with mediated products.

However, in the past decade or so, even this notion needs further revision given the relational differences between legacy media producers and consumers as a result of the advancements of Web 2.0 capabilities. This shift has been the strong focus of Jenkins (2008) as he formulated his conceptualization of “convergence culture.” For Jenkins, there is no longer a clear delineation between those who produce and those who consume media, which has led to his description of “prosumers,” or those who now have the more participatory role in the production and consumption of media content. As broader segments of the population begin to broadcast their own lives in digital domains, allowing others to share in their own mediated experience, more attention is now being given to how to observe social practice when it is mediated through digital, interactive, and networked environments. However, what is important about Jenkins’ notion of convergence culture is not that the technology deserves the most attention, but that new social formations and practices can now be examined as these prosumers participate in the collective practices of producing, distributing, and engaging with the digital media.

That is why when we consider the digital, interactive, simulated, and networked platforms of the Internet and mobile technologies, the possibilities and conceptualizations for examining social practices are virtually boundless. As these digital platforms increasingly become part of our everyday experiences, they are even creating ruptures or dislocating the public’s attention from traditional media institutions. Consider Flickr, Reddit, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter as just a few examples that now dominate Internet traffic and include broad versions of

participatory and collaborative media practices as users generate and share content. This shift from only media industry content to now include user-generated content shows that society is not only participating to a larger degree in media content production but driving our social practice toward participatory media platforms that allow us to mediate our collective experience and create shared meaning. This also means that we need to adjust our lenses of inquiry so that we can better understand how this digital landscape is reorienting cultural expression, discursive functions, sense of presence, identity formation, and social interaction. Looking at this progression in the evolution of social theory, another significant element to this discussion is that the social behavior and cultural production once considered for study through centralized, traditional, and institutional structures have themselves undergone a transformation to now include more diffuse, wide-ranging, and participatory elements as a result of new media products, tools, and technologies. Put another way, who is producing the messages and who is receiving them in the new knowledge economy is no longer so clear.

For us to sharpen our focus on digital heritage, then, we must consider how social practice is now being articulated through the ways in which heritage practitioners and contributing members of the public alike are using these participatory, multimodal platforms. In this way, we should cast our discerning gaze toward the specific examples of social behavior and interaction in this digital media landscape that might reveal the most about multimodal memory practices are articulated. For instance, if we are considering how meaning is shared through digital social practice that could potentially lead to shared memories in a

multimodal environment, which social action should be privileged? Is it the recording, uploading, sharing, commenting on, tagging, repurposing, viewing, or all the above, that offers the best opportunity for studying the social practice of making memories in a digital context?

To answer such questions, a mixture of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories has been chosen for this dissertation because each offers a great deal of agency to the actors and participants involved, as well as ways to examine the human choices, judgments, and participation that are involved in their actions that produce meaning and understanding.

For instance, considering the approaches of Gell (1998) and Sullivan (2005) to studying art practice and agency, the important point to make from their perspectives is that cultural production should be looked at as representations of social action, not just as coded symbols. What they are proposing is that it is insufficient to analyze texts alone without considering the social milieu that allowed for their creation by examining the procedures and progress made evident between the artist's ideas and their completion. This perspective allows for reflexive insight to emerge from an accounting of the processes involved in a social practice rather than an examination of outcomes. Thus, looking at patterns of behavior and activity, emphasizing agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation, allows for meaning to be made vivid by those involved and what influenced them from their surroundings.

Confino (1997) makes a similar point that it is social practice in memory

studies, not simply the text, that deserves the most attention in regards to how meaning is attributed or constructed in the acts of transmission and reception. “Studies that focus on the representation of memory, while ignoring social practice and transmission, implicitly make an assumption, as we shall see, that the representation is a transparent expression of historical mentality, of social and political values. In reality, the crucial issue is not what is represented but how this representation has been interpreted and perceived” (p. 1392). That is why, according to Confino, that “using the term memory as an explanatory device that links representation and social experience” (p. 1402) is a more useful approach than looking for isolated meaning found only through textual analysis.

Consequently, this is less of a textual or aesthetic critique of artistic representation and more of an approach that considers what social processes were being responded to and incorporated. In this way, by considering the interpretive acts, processes, and contexts, I am more clearly able to investigate the cultural practice and social agency being mediated. Given his anthropological approach, Gell (1998) considers it far more important to examine those ‘social agents,’ social processes, and social settings as a system of action involved in their production than the aesthetic properties of the representations that are produced in communicating meaning. According to Sullivan (2005), insights can be drawn from lived experience, subjectivity, and memory as agents in knowledge construction, so again it is important to consider what both practitioners and participants are encountering and bringing to their social interactions in these digital spaces. The relevance of this in the context of digital heritage is that rather than just looking at the artifacts being

contributed and shared through their portals, I am also able to explore the motivations, inspirations, and influences that produce meaning for those participating through a variety of modalities.

Another way to consider the meaning provided to the social practice and interactions occurring through the digital interfaces of cultural heritage is the social theory of symbolic interactionism, attributed to Mead (1929), Cooley (1918), Blumer (1969), and Weber (1949). This phenomenological theory basically asserts that the approach people take towards certain things are based on the meanings they attribute to them, which are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. This creates a social understanding of reality, where meaning and definitions of situations and actions are created through social interaction. If we are once again to focus our attention on the human agency involved, we should be able to determine the meaning and orientations the actors involved bring to their artifacts and processes. Thus, if we want to understand the social contexts of certain types of behaviors exhibited in digital heritage, this framework is useful to interrogate the individuals involved for what types of meanings they attribute to their interactions.

According to the theory of social constructionism, which is often attributed to Berger and Luckmann (1966), it is through our social interactions and contingent upon socially constructed categories that meaning is reproduced. This theory, then, also provides a useful explanatory framework because it considers the social construction of knowledge and interpretation by proposing that our actions are based on social conventions and subject to social regulations. This process of

socialization is important in this study because it is imperative to understand what is considered acceptable when interacting with digital heritage platforms and the meaning that is produced through this interaction based on cultural influences. It is hoped that by combining elements of both symbolic interactionism and social constructionism, a clearer understanding can emerge about the meanings associated with the various activities involved and what it means for participants that they are involving themselves in the construction of collective memory through their social practices.

Lastly, the actor-networked theory championed by Latour (2005) provides insight into this research by offering a performative definition of social aggregates that looks at the social connections between participants. This approach allows researchers to trace the social through their associations and interactions within a network, designating the space itself as an actor in the process. In other words, Latour proposes that the meaning of the social emerges by tracing the movement of social interaction that is embodied in a variety of material forms within a network of associations. But it must be understood that the network is shaped as much by the participation as it shapes the participation. In this way, the social patterns that can be observed through the social ordering, orchestration, and resistance are the result of interactive traces between individuals, technologies, institutions, devices, and texts.

I use actor-network theory to inform the gatekeeping process in terms of who is in charge of the channels and contributing the materials within digital heritage platforms, as well as how the institutional structure of the site itself shapes,

promotes, or inhibits the operators and users through the interactive process. I feel confident that exploring the mediated connections between those participants that are shaping and are shaped by the networked environment of digital heritage help to clarify the aggregated associations and activities of assembling, collecting, and composing the material that are also shaping our multimodal memory practices.

Combined, these social theories inform this dissertation by allowing for the examination of the social milieu and creative decisions that influence the creation and involvement in digital heritage (art practice and agency); the meanings attributed to the social practice and processes according to the active participants (symbolic interactionism and social constructionism); and the structure of the associations and networks that both shape and are shaped by the participating agents involved in digital heritage (actor-network). Given the qualitative research methods that are employed in this dissertation, and further explained in the next chapter, these social theories provide a useful framework for deriving meaning from those most intimately involved about how multimodal memory practices are being shaped in a digital heritage through the participatory media.

#### **THE GAP IN RESEARCH: MULTIMODAL MEMORY PRACTICES IN DIGITAL HERITAGE**

While some researchers might resist the field of memory studies for a perceived lack of empirical validity in analysis, making the application of the scientific method hardly appropriate, the scholarly notions of collective memory, cultural memory, and public memory as social constructs have a venerable history of academic consideration.

“Used with various degrees of sophistication, the notion of memory,



more practiced than theorized, has been used to denote very different things, which nonetheless share a topical common denominator: the ways in which people construct a sense of the past...it has come to denote the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in 'vehicles of memory' such as books, films, museums, commemorations, and others. The richness of memory studies is undeniable" (Confino, 1997, p. 1386).

From the earliest iterations of collective and cultural memory with Halbwachs (1980[1950]), Warburg (1999), Nora (1989), and Assman (1995), the focus was originally on the transmission of the communicative aspects of social interaction and institutional thinking through events, traditions, and narratives. Connorton (1989), Schudson (1992), and Zelizer (1992) later extended their foci to include even the media as disseminators of shared memories. More recent applications by the likes of Brockmeier (2010), Garde-Hansen (2009), Reading (2009) and van Dijck (2008) have looked at the new media in the process of memory formation. Combined, memory studies as a transdisciplinary field continues to exponentially grow and evolve.

There are also deep divisions about the nature of memory itself among the traditions of memory construction as a personal, social, or biological enterprise. So as not to wade too deeply into the differences of this contentious debate, as these distinctions are in some ways difficult to delineate as being mutually exclusive, this study presents the concepts of collective and cultural memory through a broader sociological lens for the purposes of formulating a conceptualization of what I term "multimodal memory practice," where individuals can participate and share in social remembrance through a variety of digital media platforms, mediated artifacts,

and interactive networks.

I use the term multimodal memory practice because it is a different activity altogether to participate in a mediated experience by uploading, sharing, tagging, commenting on, or viewing user-generated content through smart phones, digital readers, laptops, or all the above, than it is to simply share in watching a media product like a television show, movie, or even an audiovisual display in a museum. By this, I mean there is a shared element to each, but the more interactive, participatory nature of digital content sharing sites accessed through multiple platforms has the potential to create a different form of shared recollection than just being one of many who viewed a media program.

To clarify, I also use the term multimodal because this activity entails the use of numerous devices, as well as both offline and online behavior. For example, a person might record a particular activity outside, upload a video of it from a mobile phone network to the Internet, and then later access, tag, and share that digital file from a digital reader or laptop computer in a coffee shop. The point is that the process could involve multiple devices, multiple networks, multiple locations, and multiple types of activity. That is why I stress that it is not the digital site or object that should be studied as much as how the participatory and interactive nature of these technologies is allowing for new forms of social and memory practice.

In his book *Convergence Culture*, author Henry Jenkins (2006) proposes that the concept of convergence is more of a transformation in social processes than simply the merging of technological devices. The primary effect of this transformation, he argues, is that “convergence involves both a change in the way

media is produced and a change in the way media is consumed” (p. 16). His point is that the distribution of content, once driven by the top-down commercial media, is now being reshaped by technologies “that enable [the audience] to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content” (p. 140). Jenkins makes the additional assertion that the Internet “provides a powerful new distribution channel for amateur cultural production” (p. 136).

As such, to Jenkins, the concept of convergence represents a paradigm shift that allows for multiple ways of accessing media content online, a collective dimension, and a networked practice that can “lead to shared knowledge, shared vision, and shared actions” (p. 233). This potential for a more participatory culture through online media production and consumption is what he considers to be the foundation of what he terms “convergence culture.”

In technical terms, many digital heritage collections are expanding their roles beyond traditional archives to becoming conduits for networked communities of convergence culture. They may still contain digitized objects and material, but they are also functioning to share content and be accessed through other social media platforms. Additionally, in some cases, community members and users are also now being given more ability to contribute their own cultural artifacts and participate in the shared construction of meaning.

The changing social practices introduced by these digital cultural heritage collections clearly demonstrate the characteristics of convergence culture. More than just who produces content, or what content is saved, on these sites, there are other considerations of it being an example of converging social practice. By

involving themselves in informal experiences of shared interest through a digital content-mediated exchange, viewers create, experience, and participate in social relationships with cultural and material circumstances. The process also establishes new routines in regards to users controlling the selection and navigation of content, or how we interact with audiovisual material generated by users.

What is evident is that digital cultural heritage collections are in some cases transforming social practice by giving users the power to control what is uploaded, viewed, commented on, and shared. New communities of shared interest, knowledge, and action are subsequently created, and the ways collective memories are constructed in a digital landscape are also being reconsidered.

This conceptualization that what should be studied is the social practice, not just the technology, is also informed by scholars such as Russo et al. (2008), who argue for adjusting the cultural authority of museums by situating the public more prominently in the construction of meaning by allowing them to privilege their own material in cultural heritage collections. Similarly, in his critique of collective memory studies, Kansteiner (2002) indicated that what is truly missing from the growing body of memory research is a study that links specific social groups to how particular representations affect them in the process of media production/consumption and how they situate themselves in the process.

In other words, whereas most collective memory studies analyze particular events or memorials, they often neglect how specific groups themselves are affected by and use the media to construct their own memories and identities. So while the literature shows the *potential* for the digital social media to influence the

representation, collective identities, and collective memory within communities, few studies direct the lens to specific groups to determine how they actually *applied* the use of user-generated content-sharing practices for capturing, privileging, and sharing their own stories, memories, and identities.

Many scholars have taken into account the shift in values for heritage artifacts and collections as they go digital, such as concerns over authenticity or aura, while also increasingly turning their focus to the social dimensions of digital media in the interplay between new media technologies and their regimes of practice, interactivity, collaboration, exchange, communication, and expression activities. What they have not stipulated, however, is that it is these patterns of social practice that signify new memory practices.

To fill this gap, this research project conducts a multiple method, qualitative research analysis of the social practices afforded by the digital platforms of The Getty Research Institute, Prelinger Library and Film Archive, and Willamette Heritage Center (further detailed in Chapter III). These cultural heritage institutions were selected for this study as organizations that enable the preservation, promotion, and exhibition of cultural material and production. While each has its own distinct focus and mission, in both scope and intent, these heritage collections preserve, promote, and exhibit artifacts, such as fine art, amateur home movies, photographs, oral histories, maps, and other forms of ephemera, for the purpose of constructing narratives and transmitting from generation to generation certain cultural values and interpretations for our shared remembering.

Additionally, each of these represent varying examples of digital cultural

heritage initiatives that reconfigure digital social practice because they offer new participatory models of production, distribution, appropriation, and remediation of cultural production and digital heritage collections. This represents a shift in social practice, where society is increasingly using multimodal media platforms in cultural heritage to produce and distribute user-generated content, mediate our collective experience, and create shared meaning. While much of the media-memory literature spells out the potential for digital content and sites to influence collective memory, this study narrows the field by providing an explanatory framework on the social integration of these digital technologies in how they frame our cultural experience and social practice. Put another way, the focus extends less to the technics and possibilities of digital representation and their domains and more on how the transformative circumstances of digital content sharing and multimodal participation present the opportunity for reconfiguring memory through digital social practice.

To better understand how cultural heritage collections are using multimodal platforms, how this is transforming the construction of meaning, how this is changing the roles of the heritage practitioners and participants, and what types of multimodal memory practices are emerging, this dissertation is guided by an attempt to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** *How are multimodal platforms and social media applications reshaping cultural heritage and its forms?*

**RQ2:** *What are the implications of multimodality on digital heritage collections and memory practices?*

**RQ3:** *What memory practices are being privileged and articulated in digital heritage through multimodal platforms?*

## CONCLUSION

In reviewing the relevant literature, this chapter both reiterates the shifting perspectives of what the digital means to cultural heritage and provides the theoretical principles that are the foundation of this dissertation. In doing so, to summarize, the chapter introduces the historical evolution of collective memory studies into more current media-memory discourse, while showing that scholars are increasingly addressing the issue of how to apply media-memory discourse toward the digital landscape. It then follows with an introduction to remediation theory, which provides a useful analysis for understanding how digital cultural heritage artifacts are being constructed, repurposed, and shared. The next section of this chapter establishes gatekeeping theory as the framework that best highlights the need to examine the shifting role and functions of heritage experts, as digital heritage collections increasingly utilize multimodal platforms to position the public as more active producers of meaning.

Following these linkages to the theoretical foundations of this dissertation, another section provides the additional frameworks of social theory that inform the research methods in terms of how social behavior can be observed and explained further in a digital environment. Since the contention of this dissertation is that it is essential to study the multimodal participation with digital platforms as a form of social practice to understand how memory practices are articulated in digital heritage, elements of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories have been proposed to account for

how meaning is produced when social interactions occur through the mediated lens of participatory and networked platforms.

By attempting to draw correlations to the theoretical principles of collective memory/media-memory discourse, remediation, gatekeeping, as well as the social theories of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network, it is hoped that I can now more fully interrogate the chosen examples of the Getty Research Institute, Prelinger Archives and Library, and Willamette Heritage Center as mediated platforms that demonstrates how multimodal memory practices are being articulated in digital heritage. The next chapter provides historical context for each of these digital heritage sites, as well as clearly defines the methodological approaches this dissertation undertakes to answer the research questions outlined here.



## CHAPTER III

### TAKING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

*So it can be argued that within the field of virtual heritage there is a lack of literature focused on the theory and methodology of user interaction and interpretation of heritage.*  
(Tan & Rahaman, 2009, p. 151)

The initial chapters of this dissertation outline the transformations occurring within cultural heritage institutions as a result of the increasing digitization of collections and use of multimodal platforms, with particular consideration given to the potential impacts of these participatory media on collective memory. The literature review reveals a gap in media-memory research, specifically regarding the study of the participatory social media in digital heritage that informs how new forms of memory are being articulated in a multimodal environment. The previous chapter also identifies collective memory/media-memory discourse, remediation, and gatekeeping as the theoretical foundations informing this study, along with further grounding by the social theories of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories.

To pursue the goal of better understanding how memory practices are articulated in the multimodal environment of digital heritage, this dissertation follows an inductive and heuristic qualitative research approach. By examining a phenomenon to gather descriptive and explanatory data, I attempt to provide “new interpretations, new perspectives, new meanings, and fresh insights” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 137). To do so, this study employs a variety of qualitative

research methods, including data and evidence gathered through an interpretive framework of in-depth interviews, participant observations, and thematic analysis to yield fresh insights.

Given the complexity of the issue at hand, my approach is to incorporate a broader spectrum of evidence than a single case study might offer. Three cultural heritage institutions were selected for this study based on their varying degrees of digital offerings, activities, and level of influence. The units of analysis for this study are the discursive interpretations emerging from the in-depth interviews and participant observations from practitioners and participants of these three heritage institutions. The first is the Getty Research Institute, which includes an internationally renowned museum and research archive that allows its participants to interact with its collection of fine arts materials across a variety of digital platforms and social media applications. The second is the Prelinger Library and Archive, a library of cultural ephemera and film archive of amateur production that allows users to appropriate and remediate its literature and filmic offerings. The third is the Willamette Heritage Center, a regional heritage organization that uses its digital portal to provide access to its archival collection and construct the collective memory of a local community.

Given the variety in scope and intent among these institutions, a direct comparison is not possible. Rather, it is hoped that the findings from the assortment of data collection techniques as well as the differentiation in the chosen sites more broadly inform the overall issue of how multimodal memory practices can be articulated through varying degrees of participation, through a variety of media

platforms, for a variety of purposes, with a variety of digital heritage organizations.

My methodological approach to examining the discursive interpretations of heritage practitioners and participants for this study takes a multilateral form of collecting data, including in-depth interviewing, participant observations, and thematic analysis. The in-depth interviews allowed me to gather the self-reported and expressed perspectives of cultural heritage practitioners and participants for analysis, while the limited use of participant observations enabled me to review actual digital practices and processes. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the underlying themes that emerged from interviews, their communications, sites, collections, and modalities.

At the outset of this project, my intention was to utilize a method of discourse analysis to reveal the underlying themes of power, structuration, and ideology as an explanatory framework for multimodal memory practices in digital heritage. However, the diffuse environment and varying roles of respondents quickly illustrated the limitations of this approach. Though this project speaks to the power and structuration of cultural heritage in the new media landscape, the purpose is not to challenge the ideological role of cultural heritage in society. There are many ways, of course, in which to interpret the stance of cultural heritage institutions, the selectivity of evidence they display, the narratives of our shared pasts they produce, and the cultural perspectives they promote. However, such inquiry is not the intent of this dissertation.

Rather, it is my position that cultural heritage institutions maintain a specific station in our society as keepers, collectors, and interpreters of cultural production

and our collective histories regardless of their particular prerogatives or agenda. Taking this positionality at face value allows me to investigate how heritage practitioners and participants interpret their own activities instead of trying to judge the hegemonic role of cultural heritage itself. Recognizing this early on in the data collection phase also allows me to turn my attention to the respondents' themes and discursive interpretations of digital practice without questioning the purpose of cultural heritage writ large. This recognition thus led me to shift my focus to a thematic analysis of what is discussed as an organizational structure for interpreting the meaning assigned by heritage practitioners and participants.

Additionally, as further clarification, the intent here is neither to focus on the memories that are constructed (i.e., whether they are widely shared or if they are enduring) nor to put too much emphasis on the organizations themselves (the three cultural heritage institutions) as sites of memory. Rather, the intention is to focus on the discursive formations and social practices that are allowed within their digital interfaces and portals as to how memory can be articulated and shared in a multimodal environment. This requires a thematic analysis of discursive interpretations regarding the available digital functions and pathways these portals employ as well as in-depth understanding from practitioners and participants about what they think changing practices of multimodal participation mean and how changes in their roles might affect the construction of shared memory. Thus, a significant amount of data collected for this study came through qualitative interviewing methods and is interpreted through the perspectives of the active agents, participants, and mediators.

## THE MANY FACES OF DIGITAL HERITAGE

### *The Getty Research Institute*

The first heritage organization studied was the Getty Research Institute, an internationally renowned repository of fine art that is, according to its mission statement, “dedicated to furthering knowledge and advancing understanding of the visual arts and their various histories through its expertise, active collecting program, public programs, institutional collaborations, exhibitions, publications, digital services, and residential scholars programs” (*Getty Research Institute*, n.d.).

In addition to being an extension of the Getty Center and Getty Villa, two of southern California’s premiere fine arts museums, the Getty Research Institute is also connected to Getty Images, the Getty Foundation, the Getty Trust, and the Getty Conservation Institute, all of which serve an international community of scholars and the interested public through research, critical inquiry, scholarly exchange, exhibitions, publications, and educational programs.

However, while the Getty Research Institute is well known for its exhibition of fine arts, special collections, rare materials, and digital resources, in May 2012 it also launched the Getty Research Portal, a free online search platform providing global access to digitized art history texts in the public domain from a number of libraries worldwide. The digital portal is likely to play a significant role in the digital humanities and art history because it allows, free to all users, the ability to search and download complete digital copies of publications for the study of art, architecture, material culture, and related fields through a multilingual,

multicultural union catalog.

Collaborating institutions that are making their libraries and resources more widely available through the digital platform include the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, the Biblioteca de la Universidad de Malaga, the Frick Art Reference Library, the Heidelberg University Library, the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, members of the New York Art Resources Consortium, and the Thomas J. Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The intent is to widen the availability of rare books, early foundational literature, and important periodicals to students and scholars.

Features available through digital platforms of the Getty Research Institute include a variety of search tools and databases, including library catalogs, collection inventories, finding aids, photo archives, research guides, bibliographies, digital collections, article databases, research databases, publications, and collecting and provenance research. Also available through the Getty Research Institute are special collections, exhibitions, events, acquisitions, video feeds, research journals, a library of more than 1 million books and periodicals, as well as a summer research academy, scholars programs, and other research projects.

The Getty Research Portal also allows for the export of references and bibliographies into citation management tools, such as EndNote, Zotero, and Mendeley, and plans to eventually offer tools for annotating and sharing digitized texts and linking to images. The available texts will be free, downloadable, and digitized in their entirety. The initiative is funded, hosted, and administered by the Getty Research Institute. The site also offers access through several social media

sites, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest, Flickr, and Getty Iris, an online hub for blog postings.

According to a quarterly Web metrics report compiled by the Getty Research Institute, covering the first few months of 2013, certain trends in the usage of their website, traffic sources, and database resources revealed an overall increase in their digital initiatives and platforms. They saw a 33 percent increase in mobile device traffic between the second and third quarter, with the most visits through Apple iPads (54%) and Apple iPhones (30%). The total views for all GRI Web pages were 764,149 during this same quarter, which saw an increase of 4 percent from the previous quarter. Trends in traffic sources also highlighted an increase in referrals from search engines and bookmarks to its own website. There was also increasing interest in its databases, particularly more activity surrounding its digital collections, photo archives, provenance index and vocabulary sets.

Though the GRI does not consider Facebook to be a strong referral site, because their posts tend to share content directly rather than linking back to a specific Web page, their Facebook “likes” continued to increase. A photo entitled “Google Earth, Dresden, circa 1800” was one of its most popular Facebook posts during that quarter with “three times more reach than any post and twice as many people talking about it” (GRI, 2013). Specifically, there were 19,338 unique users who saw the post, 987 unique users who clicked on the post, and 328 unique users who created a story about a post, which includes when someone likes or shares a post, answers a posted question, or responds to an event invitation. This post also led to a series of repurposing activities, including conversations, translations, and

adaptations by a community of panoramic photographers. Other examples of how posted content was shared through Facebook included a ballpoint drawing from the Marjorie Cameron sketchbook, which was seen by more than 3,500 people on Facebook, mentioned in the Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art (*LACMA on Fire*) blog, and shared on the *ARTnews magazine* Facebook page with nearly 20,000 followers (GRI, 2013).

The primary rationale for choosing GRI as a site is that it demonstrates how users can interact with well-known cultural heritage materials, including those related to fine arts masterpieces that are part of the Getty collections. The Getty Research Portal is also an international effort that consists of both physical and digital environments, with social media dimensions. While it may contain fewer examples of users privileging its own materials, it does plan for increased interaction on an international scale and demonstrates the multimodal process under study in this project.

### ***The Prelinger Archive and Library***

The next institutions under study were the Prelinger Archive and Library, which were established by film historian and archivist Rick Prelinger. The Prelinger Archive, founded in 1983, is a collection of more than 60,000 “ephemeral” films (advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur). The archive was acquired by the Library of Congress’ Motion Picture Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division in 2002. The archive, which collects, preserves, and facilitates access to films of historic significance, has continued to expand and digitize its collections of home and amateur movies since 2002. Getty Images also represents the collection for



stock footage sales, but the Prelinger Archive offers these films in the public domain for free downloading, copying, sharing, reusing, and repurposing. The archive even provides a collection of mash-up, derivative works that can be published, sold, and distributed according to rights provided by Creative Commons Public Domain licenses.

The Prelinger Archive website, digitally sponsored by the Internet Archive, also offers the ability to browse the collection, view Tag Clouds, view collage films, as well as connect to blog forums, reviewed items, RSS feeds, and downloadable materials. Social media include Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, and Blogger. Other highlights include the Prelinger film screenings of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* and *Lost Landscapes of Detroit*, two film series that repurpose archival collections of industrial and amateur movies of urban history into present-day digital screenings.

Also founded by Rick Prelinger in 2004, along with his wife Megan Prelinger, is the Prelinger Library, an independent research and appropriation-friendly library of printed ephemera and materials in San Francisco, California. The collection is primarily of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century historical and public domain ephemera, including periodicals, maps, and books, mostly published in the United States, that are “not part of the cultural mainstream” (*Prelinger*, n.d.). The collection of ephemera also includes government documents, periodicals, monographs, pamphlets, clippings, flyers, zines, photographs, and more, some organized in more than 700 gray archival boxes and others in standalone or oversized collections. According to the site, the library’s unique geospatial taxonomy includes a diffuse arrangement system of

mediation, association, and juxtaposition that conceptually extends from “the physical world, into representation and culture, and ending with the abstractions of society and theory.” The library is described as “a walk through a landscape of ideas, from feet-on-the-ground to outer space.”

The Prelinger Library, with its material available for appropriation, is accessible in person and online and is a sponsored project of the Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco. This project was chosen for analysis because it provides broad access to and multimodal interaction with its collection of cultural heritage material and production. In terms of multimodality, the Prelinger Archives and Library are both physical and digital environments that extensively employ social media platforms; offer physical screenings of digital, interactive films; privilege user-generated content; and encourage remixing, repurposing, and remediating of its collection materials.

Tracking the metrics of use and downloads through the Internet Archive for the Prelinger Library, the experimental research library and appropriate space for media re-use, reveals the top 50 downloads range from six thousand to 60 thousand downloads of a variety of ephemera and literature. The top viewed item in the collection through the Internet Archive platform is the 1934 book *The Decline of American Capitalism* by author Lewis Corey. However, the most viewed items span media types that include graphic presentations, reports, directories, city guides, and indexes of motion pictures and audio-visual aids. The Prelinger Library boasts 1,248 “likes” on its Facebook page and numerous comments throughout its posts regarding events, acquisitions, and objects from its collection. The library’s photo

stream on Facebook also includes user-generated and contributed images, as well as photos of related events, people, and items in the collection. Many of the posts have also been linked to and shared through the library's Facebook and Tumblr pages.

There are more than 60,000 advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur film titles in the Prelinger Archives film collection with about 5,000 digitized and more than 2,100 titles available for free download and reuse. The collection is also categorized to include ephemeral films, stock footage, and mashups, with links to other organizations and a forum section that includes a broad range of posts and discussions about specific films and content. One of the most watched and downloaded films is a feature called "Duck and Cover" with more than 584,427 downloads and 73 reviews. The mashup section also shows a wide variety of derivative works with views and downloads that range from the hundreds to more than 4,612 for a feature called "Girls Are Dancing."

The films available to be viewed, rated, downloaded, and repurposed on the Prelinger Archive have been widely mirrored, cross-posted, and propagated throughout the Web. For instance, though the Prelinger Archive is the primary Internet source of the film "A Trip Down Market Street Before the Fire," it shows some 143,000 hits on archive.org spread over several versions and derivative works of the film. If the film is searched on YouTube as "trip down Market Street 1906," there are 1,318,118 views on just the first page, including enhancements and derivative works that present substantially unedited versions of the film. There is also a music video presenting a solid chunk of the film that currently shows 3,208,887 views, while another version had some 4 million views before it was

taken down. This would suggest that many Prelinger films have been mirrored, multiplied, and repurposed across numerous platforms. Rick Prelinger also notes that his films are often posted to Atlantic Video and BoingBoing, to mention just two, and they have been captured by countless other sites and replicated across the Web.

### ***Willamette Valley Heritage Highlights***

The third example studied was the Willamette Valley Heritage Highlights, the digital portal of the Willamette Heritage Center Library, Archives and Collections in Salem, Oregon. This digital heritage initiative and portal was chosen because it represents a more regional, localized, and community-based project.

According to the website, this portal provides direct access “into the holdings and behind the scenes work at the Willamette Heritage Center that you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home” (*Willamette Heritage Center*, n.d.). The Willamette Heritage Center, founded in 2010, was a merger between the Mission Mill Museum Association (est. 1964) and the Marion County Historical Society (est. 1950). The initiative now includes a research library, archives, collections, as well as a museum on a five-acre campus, the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem, Oregon, devoted to the cultural heritage, structures, and stories of Oregon’s past.

The portal’s categories and tags include subjects such as community memories, behind the scenes, history tidbits, and heritage happenings. Primarily focused on the Willamette Valley region of Oregon, it contains photographs, maps, videos, blogs, oral stories, newspaper clippings, and more, about local personalities, historical sites, and group chapters, drawn from archives, special collections,

historical societies, and user-generated submissions. Users can post, tag, categorize, or comment on materials, as well as submit blog posts, photographs, and videos. Like the previous examples, this cultural heritage institution offers both physical and digital environments for visitors and users to interact with their collections of cultural production. The portal does employ social media applications, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as utilize similar functions by allowing users to upload, comment on, share, and categorize user-generated and submitted material on their own site.

The Willamette Heritage Center has a much less significant Web presence than heritage organizations such as the Getty or the Prelinger Library and Archive but still manages traffic equivalent to its own community. In a summary of its metric performance, the Willamette Heritage Center boasts 9,233 unique views of its own digital archives. Most of its Web traffic comes from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom but it has visitors to its website from 38 countries. The majority of its traffic is referred through search engines (4,144 views) and its own website (563 views). A significant amount of its views also come through social media applications, primarily Facebook (362 views) and Twitter (40 views), and its blog posts (83 views).

The most frequently searched portion of the Willamette Heritage Center is its digital archives with posts such as local family albums, a flower map of the U.S., aerial photos, oral histories, and genealogical information being most viewed. Several of the more than 240 posts on its blog also received comments from participants and users, including a post about underground toilets in Salem, Ore.,

and other local reminders from the past. The center's most requested topics on its blog include history tidbits, research tips, artifacts, and other spotlights from its archives. In addition to its posts, the blog has also received 2,454 tags and 1,447 "likes" among its activities. The most frequently used search terms through the heritage center relate to state flowers, Willamette Valley voices, historic Oregon Trail information, local maps, and family histories.

### ***Further Rationale of Selection and Organization***

While all three organizations are accessible online from around the world, these digital cultural heritage portals were chosen as examples of different scales of how multimodal platforms can be employed. The intent was not to draw direct comparisons or provide a comparative analysis. The choice to analyze these three examples was instead to show that cultural heritage shows a variety of emphases, foci, and materials on different scales. Examining a cross-section of sources reveals what types of materials and interactions emerge and can be privileged in the process of multimodal memory practices in digital heritage to a variety of communities. That is why I chose to examine digital platforms that allow users to encounter and interact with materials related to the fine arts (Getty), amateur motion pictures and ephemera (Prelinger), and local, historical artifacts (Willamette Heritage).

Also, the initial intent of structure for this study was to divide the chapters of interview data and findings according to each of these sites (*see further detail in research methods section following*), with each chapter focusing on a single heritage institution. Thus, Chapter IV would focus on the Getty Research Institute, Chapter V

would focus on the Prelinger Library and Archive, and Chapter VI would focus on the Willamette Heritage Center. However, upon further review of data collected for this study, it was determined that a thematic approach made more categorical sense. The basic premise behind this decision was that, in addition to having more interviews accorded to certain sites because of the size and scope of the institutions, such as the larger Getty Research Institute versus the smaller Willamette Heritage Center, the themes that emerged from all three sites made for more interesting juxtapositions and parallels when they were examined concurrently.

In essence, had the chapters been divided by sites, then certain chapters would not only be longer than others but it also would have been more difficult to draw relationships between the similarities and differences in themes expressed in the interview data. Therefore, rather than focus only on one site per chapter, the structure of the next three chapters was instead organized according to the responses and interview data from all three sites in each chapter in relation to discursive themes that emerged during the analysis stage of this research.

Another structural decision that was made involves the quotations that were selected for the next three chapters. The orthodoxy for dissertation writing requires that extended quotations be shown as block quotes. I chose instead to display these longer quotes in a more narrative form in the body text so as to reduce distraction and not disrupt the narrative flow. In my view, block quotes tend to serve as a cue for the reader to peruse with less focus or jump ahead entirely. In contrast, the quotes presented here tell the essential story and are indicative of the discursive interpretations under study. This is not to say that the quotes used in this

dissertation are more significant than other research projects but I am making the case that maintaining a smooth narrative flow will make this particular research more cohesive and easier to follow. The more journalistic style enhances the readability of the interview data presented in the next three chapters.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The intent of this project was to focus on how digital portals are transforming the instrumental activities, content, and repertoire of roles for participants, as well as subsequent meanings and newly adopted uses that these technologies introduce to cultural heritage institutions. To gain further insight into such a fluid situation of changing practice, the research methods most appropriate were those that provide more interpretive and situational explanation. I envisioned deeper understanding coming from the discursive interpretations of heritage practitioners and participants regarding their communications, sites, collections, and modalities. To this end, I conducted in-depth interviews over a period of eight months, ending with a total of 16 heritage practitioners and participants, representing all three institutions, to see what cultural meanings, understandings, experiences, and perspectives emerge from the discussions. To a lesser degree, when appropriate, I participated in activities in order to observe how practitioners and participants interacted with these platforms, their various offerings, and their capabilities for participation. I also attended several screenings of the *Lost Landscapes* film series.

My methodological approach to examining the discursive interpretations of



heritage practitioners and participants for this study was a multilateral form of collecting data, including in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and thematic analysis. I designed this complementary methodological approach to address a set of research questions investigating the idea that communities articulate shared memories in the digital landscape through multimodal memory practices. In other words, this research sought to understand how digital platforms and social media practices privilege the forms of interaction, participation, and activity that constitute contemporary memory practices. The methods provided the framework for interrogating changes in discursive interpretations and digital practices through multimodal platforms in cultural heritage.

The following section explains each method in greater detail.

### ***In-Depth Interviews***

The preponderance of data for this research project was collected through in-depth interviews with 16 heritage practitioners and participants. The interviews were conducted over the course of eight months between June 2013 and January 2014. The duration of each interview lasted approximately one-to-two hours. Most of these interviews took place onsite and in-person through several visitations to each location, while four were conducted over the phone.

I visited the Getty Research Institute, the largest, best funded and best staffed institute in the study, on multiple occasions between June 2013 and September 2013. There, I interviewed head of digital art history access, Murtha Baca; digital art history access research assistant, Francesca Albrezzi; visual artist, art historian, research associate, and assistant to the director of the GRI, Anja Foerschner;

managing editor of Web and communications Liz McDermott; and Susan Edwards, senior writer/editor of the Getty Trust communications department. They gave me complete access to the GRI facilities and numerous demonstrations of the various multimodal platforms, their functions, and capabilities. During this period, I also interviewed by phone Anne Helmreich, senior program officer of the Getty Foundation, as well as frequent Getty visitor and participant Adam F. Scott, adjunct associate professor at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Between August and September 2013, I conducted onsite visits to both the Prelinger Library and Archive in San Francisco, California, where I interviewed founder Rick Prelinger; his wife and co-founder of the Prelinger Library, Megan Prelinger; and head volunteer of film preservation for the Prelinger Archive Stefano Boni. In December 2013, I visited the Bay Area again and participated in two screenings of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* film series – one at the renowned Castro Theater and the other as part of a fundraiser for the Internet Archive, following a devastating fire to the facility in November 2013. It was there that I made contact with two participants, Roger MacDonald, Director of the Television Archive of the Internet Archive; and photographer and disabilities advocate Suzanne Levine. In addition to lengthy conversations with both participants at the fundraising event, I also interviewed each by phone in January 2014.

In October and November of 2013, I visited the Willamette Heritage Center in Salem, Oregon, twice to interview collections manager and archivist Kylie Pine, as well as development director Amy Vandergrift. Subsequently, I was referred to participant volunteer Sandy Bond, whom I interviewed via phone in January 2014.

I initially made contact with each respondent via phone or email. Then I sent each an introductory letter (see *Appendix A*) that spelled out the proposed parameters of my research and proposed topics for possible discussion. Each respondent was then instructed to complete a consent form (see *Appendix B*) to be included in this dissertation and was given the option of being named or having a pseudonym assigned. Every respondent was willing to have his or her words recorded and agreed to be identified by name within these pages.

To avoid time conflicts or arbitrary deadlines, I arranged each appointed interview to meet the scheduling needs of respondents. Only a few had any professional interruptions or other intrusions that halted the interview questions as they were being asked. In every situation, except one, the respondents had allocated sufficient time for the interviews to be conducted in their entirety. The exception was an interview that needed to be cut short and re-scheduled when a respondent needed to attend an impromptu meeting. That interview was re-scheduled and completed at another date. Each onsite interview and participant observation was conducted within institutional settings, such as individual offices and meeting rooms, as well as archive, library, and museum spaces.

The majority of respondents to this study were women (with 12 being female and 4 male). The respondents represented a variety of roles within heritage institutions, including founders, directors, research associates, communication specialists, archivists, volunteers, and contributing participants. Although I make no attempt to generalize my findings, this cross-section of heritage practitioners and participants did provide a multiplicity of perspectives and individual insights

regarding the subject at hand. Including more public participants would have strengthened the study; however, time and logistical constraints, as well as the anonymity of user information, made it difficult to identify and connect with more participants for interviews.

My contact with respondents was limited to those with whom I was able to reach via phone, email, in-person, or via a direct referral. Though fewer in number than anticipated, the respondents provided distinct information and a diversity of perspectives related to their direct roles in maintaining and contributing to the digital heritage platforms. Because the research focuses on shared experiences, understanding, opinions, and behaviors, the discursive interpretations that emerged from the qualitative interviewing provided in-depth understanding and insight for all three research questions in this study.

A semi-structured interview guide provided a framework of key topics, ideas, and themes through questions, follow-ups, and probes. The question guide was semi-structured so that I had the ability to deviate from structured interview questions and follow new threads of conversation that emerged in the dialogue, while also considering suggestions and references for follow-up lines of inquiry or clarification (Lindloff & Taylor, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Contact was initially made with each respondent either via phone, email, or in-person. Synchronous online-mediated channels, such as Skype, chat rooms, or forums, were not used to facilitate interviews during the data collection period. My preference was to conduct the interviews in-person to maximize the ability to observe nonverbal cues and behaviors during the interview process.

While a certain degree of consistency in questions occurred, there was also a certain measure of variation based on the context of the interviews and role of the interviewee. For instance, while interviewing heritage practitioners, some of the questions focused on the decision-making role of governance or mission of the respective organization, as well as follow up with questions about technical development. Conversely, when interviewing a participant, I distinguished my line of questioning by asking for an opinion about the multimodal platform offerings, but I did not pose direct questions about the decision-making process for how the portal was developed. These decisions were made to accommodate the applicable knowledge, experience, and role of respondents.

In addition to the proposed questions from the semi-structured interview guide, other topics and threads of discussion were introduced and covered during the course of each interview. I also revised, re-articulated, and personalized questions throughout the gathering of interview data for this study so as to allow respondents the ability to express their own experiences and perspectives in depth.

The following is an initial iterative list of questions posed during interviews with heritage practitioners as part of the semi-structured question guide:

1. *How would you define cultural heritage?*
2. *What roles do the participatory media play in the overall purpose of cultural heritage?*
3. *In what ways are these digital platforms affecting the roles of cultural heritage practitioners?*
4. *How have these platforms affected the selection, preservation, and exhibition goals of cultural heritage institutions?*
5. *What kind of influence do these platforms have on what is considered cultural heritage or the types of artifacts that are being privileged?*
6. *How are multimodal platforms being used to interact with the public?*
7. *What forms of interpretation, explanation, and meaning construction are emerging through public interaction with these platforms?*

8. *What forms of interactive and digital practice are being privileged through the use of multimodal platforms and social media applications?*
9. *What role do you think cultural heritage initiatives, projects, and materials play in the construction of collective memory?*
10. *How does the multimodality of these platforms affect the experience of digital heritage?*

During interviews with heritage participants, I posed another set of questions as part of the semi-structured question guide that included the following:

1. *How would you define cultural heritage and what role does it play in the formation of collective memory?*
2. *How do you use the digital platforms and participatory media to interact with digital cultural heritage?*
3. *What are your goals when you participate with these artifacts?*
4. *What types of digital heritage material do you contribute or interact with most frequently? Why?*
5. *What impact do you think these digital platforms are having on the process of cultural heritage?*
6. *In what ways are digital platforms affecting the role of the public in how heritage collections are selected, organized, and interpreted?*
7. *How are these platforms impacting what forms of artifacts or explanations are being privileged in digital heritage?*
8. *What types of interaction with digital platforms and content – sharing, commenting on, repurposing - do you find most memorable? Why?*
9. *Does the multimodality of these platforms affect how you experience cultural heritage? Please explain.*
10. *In what ways do you think interacting with these platforms affects how and what we choose to remember?*

These exemplify questions I posed to initiate a broader discussion about how the participatory elements of these platforms are changing the roles of heritage practitioners and participants, as well as what the participation with these platforms means in terms of articulating multimodal memory practices in a digital environment. Again, however, while attempting to draw out certain thematic consistency, each interview was distinct according to the role of the respondents and the relevant discussions that emerged.

The collection of digitally audiotaped interviews was also a key component of this project. Once interviews were collected, I then carefully transcribed the audiotapes into text documents. Each hour of recorded interviews typically took three to four hours of transcription. The completed transcripts reflected the interviews in their entirety, including minutiae and repetition, not just of highlights. To ensure accuracy, I conducted an audit for each interview by listening to the audio files while comparing them against the written transcriptions. I provided each respondent with copies of the transcripts for further review, fact-checking, and possible revisions (see *Appendix C*). While instructing respondents to focus their reviews mostly on accuracy, I also allowed them to contribute additional details or contextual information that might have been overlooked during the actual interviews. Respondents submitted few additional points of information during this stage while other measures of accuracy were duly noted and subsequently included.

### ***Participant Observations***

When applicable, I conducted both participant and passive observations of subjects interacting with the digital platforms, applications, and artifacts. This totaled approximately 20 hours of extensive observations, including in various capacities of direct participation and detailed notetaking of events, activities during interviews, interactions with platforms and collections, and other institutional practices and procedures.

While visiting the Getty Research Institute on four separate occasions, I observed numerous demonstrations of the design and capabilities of their available multimodal platforms and social media applications, as well as viewed direct

interaction with their content. For example, Murtha Baca, head of digital art history access at the GRI, walked me through the decision-making process involved with the Scholars' Workspace application. This included exhibiting the interactive processes of annotating and collaborating on interpretation and research projects through the multimodal platform. Susan Edwards, senior Web writer/editor for the Getty Trust, also gave me in-depth demonstrations of several multimodal applications, including the Getty's digital games, website offerings, interactive blog, and social media output.

On another level, participant observations in the case of physical interaction on-site in the various archives or, more particularly, the interaction occurring between participants and digital heritage materials at specific events like the Prelinger screening of his urban history films, *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* and *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*, also provided valuable insight into the participatory and interactive process of multimodal memory construction. I also spent time in the appropriative space of the Prelinger Library observing participants interacting with the tangible collections and the Prelinger Archive, where volunteer and film preservationist Stefano Boni showed me the archival space and how amateur home films are stored, processed, cataloged, and analyzed for digitization. Similarly, I spent time in the archives of the Willamette Heritage Center as collections manager and archivist Kylie Pine demonstrated how she chose certain objects to be used for her their interactive blog.

In addition to these specific events and interviews, I also spent several hours at each location observing and taking extensive field notes of interactions and



activities of participants in the archival and collection spaces, as well as between the heritage practitioners, participants, and the platforms they were using. As a result of these observations, I compiled more 50 pages of detailed notes that I used to inform, substantiate, and triangulate the available interview data and the discursive interpretations that are revealed. These notes detailed information about settings, observable behaviors, specific pathways of digital activity, and further descriptions of interactions and events. Given the extent of interview data included in this dissertation, I have not integrated much of this additional descriptive information obtained from my notes into the actual transcripts for concerns of the overall length of this project, but these details proved useful by allowing me to provide additional context at times to specific quotes.

This ethnographic practice was intended to highlight how subjects navigate these technologies and reveal the rationale for their choices and the meaning afforded to the practice, step-by-step. The purpose to these observations was not only to provide “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), but also to witness the participation in practice so as to glean better understanding for how subjects interact with the technology and what that might mean for memory construction.

As Wimmer and Dominick (2006) concede, field observations can be “particularly suitable for a study of the gatekeeping process...because it is difficult to quantify gatekeeping” (p. 122). So for the purposes of this study, one benefit to participant observations was to observe the role of heritage practitioners to see how these digital portals affect their gatekeeping decisions. Thus, based on the relevance and situation, I was able to observe the interactions of heritage

practitioners and participants in the environment of natural settings, including onsite with their tangible collections and with various digital platforms. The combination of in-depth interviews and field observations yielded a variety of key insights into their motivations, thought processes, and discursive interpretations of their activities.

### ***Thematic Analysis***

As previously explained, the initial iteration of this project was to conduct a discourse analysis of respondents' interviews, peripheral discussions, heritage organizations' communications, sites, collections, texts, and modalities to reveal the underlying ideology of digital cultural heritage emerging from the underlying principles, symbols, or meanings expressed through texts and related artifacts. In particular, I had hoped to rely on van Dijk's (1993) principles of discourse analysis, which "focus on dominance relations by elite groups and institutions as they are being enacted, legitimated or otherwise reproduced by text and talk. One of the crucial elements of this analysis of the relations between power and discourse is the patterns of access to (public) discourse for different social groups...More specifically, critical discourse analysts want to know what structure, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction" (pp. 249-250).

However, the diffuse environment, multiplicity of activities and perspectives, as well as the varying roles of respondents quickly illustrated the limitations of this approach. While the issues of power, dominance, and institutional structuration clearly emerge from the interview data, what I found most revealing were the

various discursive interpretations and meanings heritage practitioners and participants attributed to their own digital practices. That is why early on during the data collection stage of this research, I concluded that a thematic analysis would be more effective to examine and organize the themes that emerged from both the self-reported interviews and other contextual information expressed through these digital portals.

According to Aronson (1994), performing a thematic analysis can be useful to “analyze informants’ talk about their experiences” and because it “focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behavior” (p. 1). Aronson further describes the process as applying different explanations from patterns of identifiable themes that emerge from ethnographic interviews and transcribed conversations. Identifying these central themes makes it possible to then catalog emerging patterns of sub-themes and produce further inferences through this interpretive approach.

As a result, certain patterns of discursive interpretation, explanation, assumptions, and constructions of meaning emerged from interviews with heritage practitioners and participants that allowed me to categorize, organize, and contextualize these themes and preferred meanings through the thematic analysis phase. For the purposes of this study, the interview transcripts, as well as other communications, sites, collections, and modalities, were all subject to thematic analysis to see what underlying themes would emerge from these expository inferences.

To triangulate my data between these multiple methods, I compared the

discursive themes that emerged from the interviews with the textual evidence available on the platforms to see if there were variations between what was being discussed and the digital evidence being produced. Another form of methodological triangulation I used on the data was to look at certain themes/topics from different points of view. For instance, I compared the discursive constructions of heritage practitioners to those of heritage participants to see if there were similarities or variations of themes.

Thus, the thematic analysis phase of data collection focused not only on the interview discourse but also on the structure of the sites, the threads of communication, and how the digital artifacts are organized. For example, by examining site categories, comment sections, and seeing what types of content is shared provided insight into what types of modalities these digital portals are employing, how those modalities are shaping the discourse, as well as how certain materials are being privileged within a collection. Such thematic analysis reveals certain power structures and dimensions of change occurring in curatorial authority as the public becomes more involved in the construction of meaning, as well as about the historical structure of these sites and how they are currently situated within articulation of digital heritage.

Once the aggregate data was collected, I organized the results into categorized groups that included key terms, meanings, and patterns. To accomplish this, I developed a coding schema of what Talja (1999) call “interpretive repertoire,” a set or cluster of codes, themes, categories, and dynamic terms that describe versions of meaning. This coding process was developed by reading each interview

up to five times in an effort to have patterns of key terms and meanings emerge inductively.

Interview data was categorized initially in relation to each research question and designated either to Chapter IV: Repositioning the Institution and Reinterpreting Cultural Heritage, which focuses on how multimodal platforms are changing the definitions, processes, and conceptualizations of cultural heritage; Chapter V: The Implications of Multimodal Memory Practices, which illustrates various perspectives about how cultural heritage institutions and multimodal platforms have the potential to shape memory construction; or Chapter VI: New Memory Practices through Multimodal Platforms, which describes specific approaches to memory practice in a multimodal environment. Subsets of persistent themes were then organized together categorically into a hierarchy of minor themes that become the main section headings of each chapter.

For example, Chapter IV is divided into the categories of (1) privileging access; (2) new forms of cultural heritage; (3) new roles of cultural heritage; (4) democratization versus curatorial authority; and (5) reconceptualizing institutional thinking and practice. Chapter V is organized into the categories of (1) shaping the memory debate through cultural heritage institutions; (2) negotiating between authentic experience and digital surrogates; and (3) the interplay between multimodal platforms and memory practice. The three main headings of Chapter VI represent the framework of persistent themes: (1) privileging platforms; (2) privileging practices; and (3) privileging participation.

Recognizing that there was a certain thematic consistency of dynamic terms,

topics, and meanings throughout the respondents' interviews allowed me to organize and categorize these emerging themes during the coding process. However, other than the actual transcription of interviews, this coding phase of thematic analysis was arguably the most time consuming. First, I had to read and re-read the interview transcripts numerous times to articulate the underlying meanings that guided the organization of the primary and subset of themes. In other words, what were the big picture themes and then the minor themes that further informed the larger themes? The articulation of each of these themes itself went through several iterations and redefinitions until I felt they adequately spelled out the deeper meanings. The next step involved organizing the sections of transcripts and particular quotes into specific categories. Technically speaking, this was a cut-and-paste activity that allowed me to put the transcript quotes in their respective sections based on their relation to the major and minor themes.

Certain quotes were removed, replaced, or relocated during this process, as they were not necessarily mutually exclusive in their discursive interpretations. By this it is meant that certain topics, terms, and meanings could logically fall under or be placed within several thematic or related categories. For example, repeated references to issues of access could be quotes used to inform the section on privileging access or privileging participation, as there is an overlap in meaning and interpretation for both subjects. In each case, I looked at the larger frame of the quote to determine where they would best be situated according to the major themes of the chapters and the minor themes of various section headings. Again, this was a time-consuming and repetitive practice to find just the right

organizational structure, coherence, and narrative flow. Once the outline took shape and appeared to have a logical cohesiveness, I provided further elaboration on how the themes were connected. As a result of this detailed process, I was able to gain deeper insight into how heritage practitioners and participants discursively interpret their own activities and perspectives from the themes that emerged from this thematic analysis.

The study's findings are based on data gathered over the course of the past year and make up the subsequent chapters. I have organized the discursive interpretations represented here thematically according to the full coding process. However, there are many areas of overlap in meaning and discussion, so the placement of quotes should be considered neither disparate nor mutually exclusive but rather an attempt to initiate an ongoing narrative about what it means to remember in the digital age.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPOSITIONING THE INSTITUTION AND REINTERPRETING CULTURAL HERITAGE

*In a digital age, cultural institutions increasingly view their role as aggregators and coordinators of information, in addition to their traditional roles as collecting and archiving institutions.*  
*(Klaebe & Burgess, 2008, p. 6)*

This chapter will elucidate the discursive themes that emerge from in-depth interviews with cultural heritage professionals and participants about how multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital media are reimagining the roles, purposes, and functions of cultural heritage. While some particular differences arise between the selected institutions, largely based on funding, staffing, and overall mission, what is revealed through a thematic analysis of these interviews are several consistent themes involving the impact of participatory digital media platforms on cultural heritage writ large.

Emerging from these discussions are discursive themes that, though nuanced and not necessarily mutually exclusive, will be broken into several broad categories for the purposes of this study and related to the topic of this chapter – namely, how multimodal platforms are considered to be changing cultural heritage. The broad thematic categories that constitute this chapter include: (1) privileging access; (2) new forms of cultural heritage; (3) new roles within cultural heritage; (4) democratization versus curatorial authority; and (5) re-conceptualizing institutional thinking and practice. Among these broader themes are revealed other orders of minor interpretations that also deserve further reading, including how heritage



artifacts are becoming more dynamic and searchable, how the heritage process is becoming more transparent, how gamification and social media use are shifting audience expectations, and how new forms of collaboration and job duties are creating new spaces for debate. Each of these themes will be elaborated more fully through the thread of conversations that follow in this chapter. The points of view that are represented in this and the next two chapters were elicited from in-depth interviews of 16 cultural heritage professionals and participants (7 related to the Getty Research Institute; 6 related to the Prelinger Library and Archive; and 3 from the Willamette Cultural Heritage Center) that were conducted between June 2013 and February 2014.

What the subsequent discussions most clearly illustrate is that those most intimately involved with cultural heritage, both inside and outside the institutional walls, are confronting an existential re-ordering of what cultural heritage entails, how it should be considered, and who will ultimately be the arbiter of its legacies as a consequence of digital media and multimodal platforms.

#### **PERSISTENT THEME OF PRIVILEGING ACCESS**

One of the most common refrains heard from respondents in each of the institutions reviewed in this study was the theme that multimodal heritage platforms are having a considerable impact on notions of access. This persistent theme of privileging access was applied across the entire range of ways in which users accessed heritage archives and digital content to the development of new forms of participatory engagement, data management, search functions, and even

concerns over the longevity of technology formats.

The Getty Research Institute (GRI), which has literally millions of items in its archives and special collections measuring miles in linear feet, has embraced a number of ambitious initiatives and programs in recent years to make its resources more available, particularly through digital access. In fact, having undergone a re-organization a few years ago, the Getty created an entirely new department for the Getty Research Institute called “Digital Art History Access.” Head of that department is Murtha Baca, who is quick to make a distinction between the special collections of the GRI and the Getty Museum, which she points out has a much smaller collection that is in large part on display physically in the museum. While she praises the work of the Getty Museum for creating individual Web pages for every object that is on display in the museum and making sure their objects appear number one on Google searches, thereby highlighting digital access for the museum collection, Baca also notes that increasing digital access to the Special Collections of the GRI is even more essential because its “collection is so vast...and up to now both physically and virtually less than two percent of our [collection] is accessible to anyone...because most of the treasures of the Getty Research Institute are hidden in vaults” (Baca, 2013).

Historically, Baca explains, anyone who wanted to study anything in special collections of the GRI would have to travel to the Getty campus in Los Angeles, locate the material within the collection, and could only examine or browse the material within the reading room. However, Baca points out that the process has been reconsidered with accessibility being paramount, in that visitors can now take

their own digital photographs of items they are studying and, more important, the GRI is devoting considerable effort into digitizing its collections. “So digital promises us the ability to provide much greater access to anybody around the world who has access to the Internet. But, as you know, it’s not that simple because somebody has to digitize the stuff. That’s the easy part. Then somebody has to catalog it and expose it to a search engine so that the user can find it in the first place” (Baca, 2013).

The GRI has taken other significant steps beyond just initializing the process of digitization, such as developing its online Research Portal and the Scholars’ Workspace initiative. The Research Portal allows users to access art history resources and literature from participating libraries around the world, whereas the Scholars’ Workspace is an innovative participatory platform that will allow art historians and scholars to collaborate on research projects and provide a wealth of expertise and knowledge about particular items or content in the GRI Special Collections. Baca asserts that these sorts of platforms create new conduits for conducting and applying research that promise both increased access and ease of use. “So one of the things technology obviously lets us do is we can deal with much bigger amounts of data. We can deal with it faster. In other words, like with the Getty Research Portal, which provides full digital access to the books that are in the public domain, I can search a book for every occurrence of a particular word in five seconds whereas in the old-fashioned way I would have to pour through every page of the book and write down every time the words occurred. So obviously, more access to information, fast access, the ability to process and analyze data faster”

(Baca, 2013).

Beyond the improved research capabilities afforded by these digital applications, however, launching these platforms brings with them other emerging considerations and dilemmas in art history research and cultural heritage, namely, how and when to provide access. For example, in addition to expanded search capabilities, the GRI also produces an online blog called *Iris*, written by members of each of the Getty departments on a variety of subjects. Baca wrote one blog about a digital art history workshop last spring as a way to demonstrate the paradigm shift away from what she calls “St. Augustine’s Syndrome,” where art history scholars typically focus on their research in isolation and don’t want to share their research because they want to be the first to publish it. The concept is based on numerous famous paintings of St. Augustine in his study, surrounded by books, but always alone. Now, she says, the debate has shifted toward how to best provide access and even when that should be done. To illustrate this point, Baca points to a 17<sup>th</sup> century unpublished manuscript by Mellini or some private letters by Michelangelo in Special Collections that were proposed to be turned into digital transcripts, scholarly articles, or publications – the proposals sparked heated debates over whether the materials should be published before researchers had studied them and published their findings.

“In theory, because we are a memory organization, a nonprofit, educational institution, a library’s mission is to write access to its collection, not to hide them. So if you can walk in the door, you’d have to page the material because it’s a rare thing in Special Collections. And say, I want to see the Michelangelo letter. If you could do

that physically, you should be able to virtually, too. So these are huge, huge issues and debates that we have about: When do you make things accessible?" (Baca, 2013).

This also speaks to the forms cultural heritage content can take and what is possible by being digitized. Referring again to the example of the unpublished Mellini manuscript from 1681, Baca explains that since copyright was no longer a problem, the Getty was able to present it in a multiplicity of formats that included translated copies or in the form of a born-digital publication: "The publication is going to be digital. Now, we've digitized it and we're going to put it on the Web. We've transcribed and translated it. We'll have a whole critical apparatus around it so anyone can study this thing. So that's the promise of digital" (Baca, 2013).

Anja Foerschner, assistant to GRI Director Thomas Gaehtgens, indicates that conversations about access must also consider the multimodal element made possible by these participatory platforms. What shifts, she says, is not just how easy it is to connect with digital material but also considerations about the contextual relations, explanations, and interpretations that result from accessing this material from multiple platforms in multiple locations. "I do think that it will shift so that people will look at videos in coffee shops more and consider other art forms, other objects and artifacts, as they are easier, as they are more readily accessible. You can sit in a coffee shop, you can look at things, and you can have a different context. You don't have to go to a museum and have this very firm context, where you know what to expect, and have an explanation to it, and sometimes even if it's supposed to make access to objects easier or easier to understand, I think it sometimes is

creating a distance. I mean, you have to go to the museum, you have to be in the crowd looking at the images, you have to understand it, and you have to read the labels, and I think that these barriers will shrink with all the media and platforms. You can sit and look at things and have no expectations. You don't have anyone around you that watches you as you look at anything you want or try out new things, like looking at videos, and all of a sudden you think that looks interesting... You just proceed" (Foerschner, 2013). Thus, with fewer institutional parameters, such notions of access are less about what the institution will let us see and more about what we want to see. This concept of access offers users more agency in what, how, when, and where they choose to approach digital heritage content, a distinctly different experience than one might find in a bricks-and-mortar institution.

However, Anne Helmreich of the Getty Research Institute cautions against conflating increased access with participation and active engagement. "Access is the core function of most museums and libraries but museums have long been interested in participatory engagement, you know, the experiential rather than the passive, but that's not a conversation that is exclusive to the social media by any means" (Helmreich, 2013). In other words, to Helmreich, we can perhaps speak of increasing access as a function of digital platforms in cultural heritage but we also need to realize that an institution's desire for heightened participation and engagement through these platforms is not necessarily the same thing as improved access or necessarily anything new. What is new from Helmreich's perspective is what institutions can now do in response to providing users open access to their digital collections. While much of the focus is on how so much more digital content

can be provided and accessed using these platforms, there also needs to be consideration for what institutions can learn from this access. “They want to create a way to track how people are using these images into broad categories. So they had to create a new computer interface. If I download an image, I need to briefly tell you if I’m going to use it for commercial or non-commercial purposes. Even though the museum will definitely be about open access, it still wants to have some sense of how things are being used. Which, I think, actually makes perfect sense. You’ve got these assets and it is within your purview to understand how those assets are traveling out in the world” (Helmreich, 2013).

Tracking such information is not just a matter for legal review either, according to Francesca Albrezzi of the GRI. Beyond concerns over how digital content is being used in the public domain, Albrezzi indicates that it is equally important for institutions to gain insight into user preferences and to know where users are gaining access. This provides leverage for cultural heritage organizations to develop new methods and know how to improve access for their users. “We’ve discussed using the Scholars Program as a way to have scholars tag our collections through their own research and also to expand the access so that these access points are created by people who know the material. It’s a library of endless knowledge and resources, and if the scholars are here, why not utilize them in doing their own research, to tag those things and give the public greater access points in terms of our databases?” (Albrezzi).

Liz McDermott, managing editor of Web and communications of the GRI, reduces the discussion of access to its simplest terms by emphasizing that if an art

history institution like the Getty wants to facilitate a more comprehensive discussion among a wider audience then it should broaden its terms of access. “I mean, at the most fundamental level, I love sharing art. I let people do whatever they want to do with it. I just think if people can’t have enough of it, then it’s great. It shouldn’t be exclusive. It’s wonderful. Get it out there. That can’t help but be a positive thing in the world (McDermott, 2013).

The Prelinger Library and Film Archive’s entire model is built with access being paramount. The physical library space is designed to offer complete access and repurposing possibilities with any of its tangible collection of literature and cultural ephemera. At the same time, the library also uses digital platforms and social media applications to increase accessibility and promote a dialogue among participants, including possibilities for appropriation, digital curation, and commenting. The film archive is accessed almost entirely in a digital space, as its online presence and searchable database is platformed through the Internet Archive. This affords the opportunity for users to view, download, repurpose, and post their own productions, while also functioning as a digital forum for broader discussions to take place regarding the significance of the amateur home movie collection.

Co-founder Rick Prelinger has seen the benefits of accessibility through his collection’s online presence but is also quick to assert that there continues to be a demand for the analog or physical artifacts at the same time. For Prelinger, then, complete access means giving his audience the ability to interact with his collection through both tangible and intangible means. “Digital makes it easier to quote and to



incorporate. I really got to understand what the phenomenology working with the digital rather than analog is. I used to think, 'Who cares if we make copies available via digital?' Then they're downloaded 90 million times — or that's my current estimate of online presence or material being downloaded. Ninety million download events. That's pretty cool, and indeed it is pretty cool. But it's only serving one realm of use or one realm of appreciation. So right now there's this upsurge of fascination with physical materials and with showing film again. The people we've had, 38 or 36 volunteers, come through our program, and it's all because they want to touch physical materials. It's this interest in....the essentialist characteristics of media that you can touch and see and look at. There's this fascination with looking at a film through a magnifying glass" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

While attending a screening of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* series as part of a fundraiser for the Internet Archive in San Francisco, following a devastating fire that destroyed part of their facilities and equipment, Roger MacDonald, director of the television archives of the Internet Archive, indicated that digital platforms have been transformational because, he says, "They're making it easy for cultural heritage to be accessed and preserved" (MacDonald, 2014). The signature point he makes is that these platforms are more conducive to searching content, discovery of content, modifying content, and distributing content, all as a result of increased access for heritage professionals and participants. To MacDonald, making it easier for everyone involved simply promulgates the heritage process on both ends, creating a convergence of connectivity that offers "the ease of access to knowledge" (MacDonald, 2013).

Willamette Cultural Heritage Center volunteer Sandy Bond, who assists with indexing the special collections archive and catalog, considers digital platforms as a means to reach out to cultural heritage audiences who might be interested in what a collection holds but who might not otherwise want to travel to a heritage center. Bond, who also conducts her own genealogy research by scouring related genealogy databases for census documents and images, recognizes that digital access should also be considered as a way to relieve staff time and resources, particularly for smaller, more regional organizations like the Willamette Heritage Center. “I mean it’s a new tool for getting the information out there. For people who are introverts like me, they are inclined to look around and see what’s online as opposed to visiting a cultural heritage site. It would be nice to have it online and have better access to information and be able to search better. I’m kind of big on having the information online and being able to search for it myself. That would be a lot less work for the museum staff and it would make it even more accessible. People don’t have the budget or staff to do it for you, so if they want their information to be useful to the community then they need to make it accessible without putting a burden on their staff” (Bond, 2013). Such digital access, she insists, also includes the practical matter of savings for cultural institutions on the printing and mailing costs generally associated with providing the public with physical access to documents and other information for research or general interest.

Amy Vandergrift, development director of the Willamette Heritage Center, finds that the conversation between cultural heritage institutions and their audiences is much broader when participation can exist through online access. She

argues that in the digital realm the possibility of voices to chime in to conversations of meaning and interpretation is much more extensive when the channels of communication are no longer confined to those physically present. One example Vandergrift used to illustrate her point involved several photos of two women that were being indexed by a volunteer for the Willamette Heritage Center archives. In doing a basic genealogy from information that was provided, it was determined that there was a connection to a family in Connecticut. After an online search, the volunteer reached out via email to the family, who subsequently made a trip to Oregon to provide additional information that may never have been possible without the online interaction. The Willamette Heritage Center also uses a variety of social media applications to post various photographs, documents, maps, and other artifacts online, particularly through its Willamette Valley Heritage Highlights blog, to elicit broader discoveries, interpretations, and explanations from the public.

Vandergrift also points out, however, that while this might lead someone to find a photograph of a grandmother taken when she was 9 years old (an actual example) and what that might mean to expand a family's understandings or narrative about their own familial relationships, there are other things to consider when it comes to increased access through digital platforms. Among those concerns, she insists, are cost and functionality of incorporating these technologies. "They allow us to connect with more people if we have the resources to make it available. As the development director, what I look at is: Yes, we can make the collection more accessible. It's important that we digitalize it and keep up with that technology, but we're going to have to look at the cost of how to do that"

(Vandergrift, 2013).

According to Vandergrift, the cost of access is not just a monetary expense. She also raises the pertinent question of what digital access means in a rapidly changing media and technology landscape. In other words, incorporating new digital applications to provide increased access might also eventually restrict itself by technological obsolescence. “And so if you put your collection on a floppy disk, now you struggle to find something to play it on. On slides, now you’ve got to find a slide projector to do it. Now you put it on PowerPoint. There will be a new thing...we need to use it, embrace it, and make it part of what we have. We, in fact, need to record and preserve the changes of technology, and this is an ongoing thing. So we have the typewriter, but we also have the computer....so part of our collection becomes preserving all of that and then being able to reach out and be able to provide for people that resource so that they’re able to use it. And I think it expands how we understand history” (Vandergrift, 2013).

#### **NEW FORMS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Another consistent theme that emerges from respondents to this study has to do with the increasing variety of heritage artifacts or what is now considered to be cultural heritage among this shifting landscape of digital possibilities. While concepts of intangible heritage have been expanded by UNESCO (2003) to include oral traditions, languages, social practices, rituals, performing arts, and festivals (Addison, 2007; Ahmad, 2006; Champion, 2007), the digital practices and traces afforded by multimodal heritage platforms not only remain under-theorized but

have yet to be agreed upon as to what should be considered as legitimate. The following discussions reiterate this uncertainty by highlighting new forms of digital content that deserve more attention, inquiry, and scrutiny.

One example elicited from Helmreich of the Getty Foundation refers to possible new formats of one of the most basic and essential pieces of scholarship that museums produce - the collection catalog. In it typically is contained the information about every object in a cultural heritage collection, including its provenance, its history, its acquisition history, exhibition history, and often the treatment of the object by conservators. In its simplest terms, this documentation represents the biography of every piece in a collection, which often informs the indexing process or is published as a catalog publication, and is usually accomplished through collaboration between the curators and publications staff. However, Helmreich indicates that some of the challenges with these publications are that “they’re very costly to produce, they’re very research intensive, and they actually, oddly, have a very small market....because they tend to only be bought by other museums” (Helmreich, 2013). But the biggest challenge, she says, is that once you acquire a new piece for a collection, the printed catalog is already obsolete.

“So say I’m in charge of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French paintings here at the Getty, as soon as we acquire a new 19<sup>th</sup> century French painting, my previous catalog is out of date. Or if my conservator tells me that we can do a new type of analysis or tests for all the different types of pigments used, which we couldn’t do before, now that means my conservation analysis is out of date” (Helmreich, 2013). Recognizing the expense and limited utility of these basically peer-to-peer publications, the GRI

initiated an effort to work with eight participating institutions to create new digital versions of catalogs that included more dynamic and updateable information to the online collection.

Helmreich took over this collaborative project, called the Online Scholarly Catalog Initiative, from her predecessor Tina Olson (now Director of the Williams College Museum of Art), which ambitiously was intended to include more than simply an image or PDF of an object in the GRI's collection. "What people really wanted was a much more interactive, dynamic interface... there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. One of the crucial pieces of understanding how this works is almost every institution wanted the ability to extract information from their collections management systems and have that populate the catalog. So then there would be a way that you could therefore dynamically update because you're pulling information from your collection management system. So that's one reason why the PDF won't work. The other reason is that people began to wonder what kind of features you could have in an online catalog. If you just did the PDF route you weren't fully exploiting what you could do in the online environment. I mean, obviously, you can include links, dynamic maps, the kind of Web experience we've now come to expect that really allow the catalog to be far more sophisticated and contain a lot more information" (Helmreich, 2013).

Some of the examples Helmreich uses to illustrate this point come from what some of the participating institutions, such as the Tate Britain, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago, were able to implement in their digital initiatives by adding multimedia components to their catalogs. For

instance, she explains, one of the Tate projects dealt with early 20<sup>th</sup> century painters who had been working in London, so the catalog includes film clips of London from the time in which they worked there, as well as audio clips of music from the music halls of the time period. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art project focuses solely on the paintings of painter Robert Rauschenberg. Helmreich points out that Rauschenberg had a very close relationship to that museum and visited them on a number of tours, went through the exhibition [of his work], talked about the objects, and the museum videotaped all the times he came to talk about his works of art there. “Now they have inserted those video clips in their catalogs. So you can see the object and hear the artist talking about that object. And, you know, Rauschenberg since that time has passed away, so that is going to be something no one else will be able to duplicate. So it is that kind of being able to include rich media” (Helmreich, 2013).

Helmreich also suggests that another way to integrate multimedia components beyond just improving ways to exhibit collection pieces in the catalog would be to better document the conservation analysis process, adding more behind-the-scenes information about the technical methods of analyses that museums use to evaluate and study their paintings. For instance, one example of such a robust feature includes a collaborative effort between the Art Institute of Chicago and the Indianapolis Museum of Art, where they show how x-rays can be used to look at paintings through different light conditions to reveal underlying features of how a painting was made. “So the Art Institute of Chicago, working with the Indianapolis Museum of Art, who were their technical advisors on the project,

they've come up with a tool that allows you to look at the original painting as it would look to you or I, to the naked eye, and then you can overlay the x-ray on it, which often shows you the layers underneath the surface. So, for instance, the x-ray may show you how Monet might have painted out some figures in his painting, which really actually dramatically changed the subject of the painting" (Helmreich, 2013).

These sorts of added features made possible by multimedia applications or in online environments also allow cultural heritage institutions to reconsider how to represent their content and extend the narrative to specific audiences rather than simply displaying a static object or a one-size-fits-all interpretation in their collection catalog. "So, for example, the National Gallery of Art is designing their catalog in a way that fits with their methodology. They're calling it 'Skim, Swim, or Dive.' If you're only in the Skim interface you are just getting a short paragraph that is written in a way that is digestible to a general audience. Then if you want more information, you can expand from there into the Swim platform and get language that is more aimed at a scholarly audience. Then if you want to do a Deep Dive, you get more content and more detailed technical analysis written for a peer-to-peer audience. So the way you could also repackage content can be aimed at multiple audiences instead of just having to think about a single audience or publication" (Helmreich, 2013).

While having the capability to include such value-added features may seem like a natural progression, this also means that the work of cultural heritage institutions is never done. Adding all of these new formats, multimedia content, and



participatory applications also means more content to select, new modes of interpretation, and an ongoing dialogue that requires curators to constantly have to revisit and update the catalog. Another aspect to this is to what degree should user input, comments, and recordable forms of participation be included and managed as now an extension of what cultural institutions should consider part of their own collections and heritage? “I think that is varied by institution because one of the things that is just a pragmatic reality, if you open up the project, is who is going to sit there and vet it and update it and maintain that dialog? One of the project directors made this great analogy to me. She said to me, ‘you know,’ because she’s worked in museum publishing a long time, ‘it used to be that writing a catalog felt like giving birth to a baby, but when you were done somebody else took care of the baby.’ They marketed it, they packaged it, they put it out there and at the point of birth you were done. But she said, ‘Now, with the online catalog, I feel like I’m not only giving birth to the baby, but I’m in charge of its daycare and I have to constantly be checking on it.’ That is why it has been each institution’s prerogative and the curator saying, ‘This is really important, this is high on my priority list, to get this feedback from the user community, that I will make it part of my regular work flow.’ For other curators, that have other priorities, they just might not be able to say that updating the catalog is part of my daily work flow, it may just be some they revisit either quarterly or annually. There’s a lot to be discovered and a public that’s eager for new forms of interpretation and those are just endless pockets that you could keep filling and filling and filling” (Helmreich, 2013).

According to Albrezzi of the GRI, another way to manage some of this

expanded, ongoing dialogue is to provide “a whole slew of social media link ups” through the Getty Research Portal. She says this is particularly important for having users provide additional citations to their digital collection materials, as well as how to rethink traditional notions of the archive. For example, she says, “In terms of the Japanese tsunami, there’s been a lot of work done in terms of preservation, like collections of tweets, tracking Facebook posts, that kind of thing...Creating a collective memory around an event, a modern event, is one of the newer ways that this kind of technology is being used. Not in terms of accessing material that’s stored away in a museum or archive somewhere but in actually forming the archive now. You know, recognizing an important event in history... and where are the materials that are going to create the history, the narrated history, [are] now being drawn from, as opposed to television broadcasts or even movies, in terms of cultural interpretation, now a lot of projects are turning toward a collection of social media output and forming an archive that way. You know, photographs from cell phones not just news cameras. And that’s becoming the new archive” (Albrezzi, 2013).

Edwards of the Getty Trust asserts that much of this additional material, output, and dialogue from the blogs, Web pages, social media applications, online games, and other digital platforms should be considered as an extension of what has previously been considered cultural heritage. In other words, these digital traces are just as much a form of cultural heritage as an object in an archive, museum, or library. “Well, I would simply say that this is another publication arm of the Getty. We’re publishing just like you publish a book. And a book is a part of cultural heritage because it shows research and it’s explaining something. What you put on

the Web is publishing” (Edwards, 2013).

Baca of the GRI takes this proposition a step further when she asserts that even the data sets that the Getty produces might need to be considered innovative forms of cultural heritage, forms that are becoming as valuable to researchers as original artifacts, digital images of museum objects or newly acquired social media output. However, Baca adds, to make this content most effective requires a sound open content or open access policy like the Getty is trying to roll out to make these data sets more available and usable. “We have this huge data sets [sic] like the Vocabularies, the Provenance Index data, which is like millions of records of archival documents. Scholars would love to get their hands on that data. So that’s a so-called big data issue where, up to now, all of our research databases like the Vocabularies, the Provenance Index Database, the Bibliography of the History of Art, the Getty Conservation Institute has art and archaeology technical abstracts, all that data is available right at this moment for free on the Web so you can go on there. But if you want to get the data, you have to cut and paste at each individual record, whereas with an open content policy it means we would make the huge massive data sets available where researchers could take the whole data set and do whatever they want with it. The idea is eventually all of that will be available. You search it on the Getty website. You click on it. You download it. You do anything you want with it” (Baca, 2013).

Megan Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library, believes that previously overlooked and ephemeral materials will increasingly be considered by cultural institutions as worth being given a second chance as cultural heritage. That

is why the Prelinger Library houses, provides access to, and allows for the appropriation of evidence that she says does not always fit neatly within what she calls, “the academic sense of a canon of great works” (Prelinger, M., 2013), including trade literature, government literature, pamphlet literature, and periodicals that were meant to have a shorter lifespan as opposed to great works of literature that were intended to last. Prelinger was also inspired by the visually and creatively rich ‘Zine culture, which she thinks should prompt cultural institutions to expand their definitions of cultural heritage to include more ephemeral forms of cultural production. In a way, Prelinger is taking the “Long Tail” approach, a term coined by Chris Anderson in a 2004 *Wired* magazine article and explored further in his subsequent book, which explains how the Internet’s potential for unlimited access affords failed, alternative, or niche content the possibility of securing new revenue sources and reaching out to new audiences.

Similarly, the Prelinger Library seeks to reintroduce its audiences to cultural production forms and materials that may have initially escaped attention or been considered not worth saving in the first place. “So one thing to share is that there’s been something of a total redefinition of what a canon is...what’s Google been able to digitize, what has the Internet Archive been able to digitize. And a lot of people tend to think that with all the major Hathi Trust projects, the Open Content Alliance, Google books, that the bases have been covered. But from where I sit, in the middle of this library, which only 8 percent is digitized, I still see 92 percent of printed cultural memory from the 20th and 19th century as not being digitized, and part of that is because of obscurity. People don’t even know something exists so they don’t

hunt it out to digitize it. But part of it is also like the physical barrier — something's too physically fragile or something's under rights restrictions. Through a lot of organizations and initiatives, a huge amount of cultural memory that's started out in print format has been digitized and has become something that you can play with in a great big, digital sandbox. But I see just a huge amount of literature omitted from that largely between ignorance and inappropriateness for digitalization" (Prelinger, M. 2013).

MacDonald of the Internet Archive argues that we are changing what we consider to be cultural heritage artifacts not just in terms of the types of things we select but in how we record, search, and present these items through digital media data. "We are making them more discoverable and more interpretable. Being able to understand the language...I'm not sure this analogy works at all. But you know, hieroglyphs weren't understandable, they were pretty pictures for several thousand years because the language was lost, until the Rosetta Stone was discovered. Suddenly that which was preserved could now be interpretable. By examining metadata through speech recognition to image analysis, to all of the other methods for examining media, we can now understand more and interpret more, and gain more insight from media that was fundamentally less accessible" (MacDonald, 2013).

Even the content is changing based on changes in technology. For example, Stefano Boni, head of the Prelinger Archive participatory volunteer group, has observed a change in what people are choosing to document in the amateur home movies that are digitized in the collection. For example, he points to how home

movies from the 1930s are more family-oriented, showing scenes within the home. But from the 1940s through the 1960s, he sees more footage being taken of family vacations to popular destinations like Yosemite, which he believes says something about changing cultural values and what can be revealed from watching these amateur productions. Another change he notes concerns how changes in technology inform the content and availability of certain material. By the late 1970s, he sees a dramatic drop off in the collection of home movies, particularly a decline in the popular Super 8 material, which he attributes to the development of home video cameras in the 1980s. From his perspective, then, what should be considered cultural heritage is equally constrained by technological innovation and obsolescence. Just as painting was in some ways superseded by photography in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he wonders if maybe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century more attention will be given to digital content produced for and through social media as preferred forms of cultural heritage. "I think that makes sense as far as the evolution of all the technology. Especially with Vine and YouTube, people just uploading their own stuff that they've taken off their phone. I think that makes sense" (Boni, 2013).

Kylie Pine of the Willamette Cultural Heritage Center agrees that much of the conversations that occur through Flickr or Facebook might simply be a new record of cultural heritage in the way letters might once have been the primary form of correspondence. "I find Facebook really fascinating, a person's personal Facebook page really fascinating, as in some ways an archive in and of itself of someone's life. And I found myself going back, looking at when did that happen and I can go back on Facebook and I can search it and I can find out: Oh, it was in 2010. And I find that a

very interesting, self-curated archive of your own personal story. That's in some ways what newspapers have been in the past. It's somewhat [like what] personal correspondences has [sic] been in the past, looking overarchingly" (Pine, 2013).

At the same time, while she acknowledges social media as being a legitimate emerging record, she also finds herself concerned about how the collection process will proceed in the face of such immense memory of data. "One of the outputs of digitization and using digital media is a bazillion different types of things whereas, before, you were restricted by how much paper you could store and those kinds of things. Now you're looking at more information than we could possibly ever keep. And how do you start collecting that? How do you start keeping that? And will this type of organization, this historical society, be able to take some of that and preserve it? It's changing so fast and so much faster than any of our other technologies have changed before that archivists and other people are kind of like, 'Aaahhh'" (Pine, 2013).

Another concern raised by Amy Vandergrift of the Willamette Heritage Center is if we are to someday try to maintain collections of everyone's emails, uploaded pictures and videos, our entire digital footprints, much like archives have often preserved personal letters and other mementos from the past, what happens to the other tangible records and original documents, if everything is just being recorded and saved in digital formats? Will we destroy the originals because a digital copy is saved on a computer somewhere? Are other valuable records also being lost, erased, or destroyed as companies, groups, or individuals wipe hard drives clean as they upgrade technology or have another person use a computer? In

other words, without hard copies, are digital records going to tell us the full story or even last? While she expresses such concerns, Vandergrift also makes the case that maybe it is not a matter of the digital replacing tangible records as much as it should be thought of as broadening the corpus of material that cultural heritage institutions will have at their disposal to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret. “I don’t think it’ll replace. I think it will add to. I think that’s probably what heritage is - the constant addition of new things. What we will do now that we have a digital age [is see] that increase. So it doesn’t remove this stuff, but it expands how we can collect data” (Vandergrift, 2013).

Adam F. Scott, adjunct associate professor at the Art Institute of Chicago, frequently visits the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and utilizes many of its resources available through its Research Portal and various multimodal platforms. While his particular interests deal primarily with painting in particular, and art history in general, his perspective regarding the digital representation of cultural heritage is that it creates a more diffusive environment for how we view our past, what should be included in those frames, and how we can get a more complete picture of the entire process. According to Scott, one of the most dramatic implications is that what becomes visible is no longer just the digital representations of the objects or artifacts but every trace of interaction, including those with the data sets, the metrics, the comments, the searches, the downloads, the uploads, the sharing, all of which can be followed, becoming a thread that weaves a more intricate tapestry of how we consider cultural heritage production, meaning, and interpretation. In other words, with the digital, we see every aspect of cultural heritage in ways never before



possible.

“It reminds us of who we think we are and tells the world who we want to be, what we want them to think of us, and the visual byproducts of our cultural heritage plays a huge role in that. We are a visual culture and our heritage is bound up in that. But the visual is slippery because images cannot defend themselves. Images are silent. They can be used in lots of different ways. Heritage institutions are framing devices that attempt to frame a viewpoint. So how we see ourselves is already filtered. But we have a radical inclusionary structure now with the digital. The digital space has become a new form of public space in a way. It’s not a space at all but we see it that way, as a different kind of public realm. It’s a generator that multiplies things and copies things and manipulates things. Flickr, Photobucket, Instagram allow us to continually upload things. It mixes up what our notion of heritage even is because if everyone is constantly manipulating it and adding to it, then what you don’t have are authoritative voices defining what the heritage is. It’s like a giant refractory system. Everyone is looking at everyone else’s stuff in a multitude of gazes that are hyper-visualized in this somewhat unifying space. One thing you could say about the digital is that it makes visual what used to not be visualizable. There’s always been a lot of viewpoints but now there’s clear visual evidence of that, visual or textual manifestations of them” (Scott, 2013).

#### **NEW ROLES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

So if we are to consider that multimodal heritage platforms are expanding the menu of possibilities for what can be considered cultural heritage evidence then

how does this impact those who are most intimately involved in the heritage process? If the selection, preservation, exhibition, and interpretation of cultural heritage artifacts must now include these broader iterations of what should be included as a result of the digital then what sorts of implications are there for how heritage professionals and participants must adjust to these new features, circumstances, and environments?

According to the GRI's Head of Digital Art History Access Murtha Baca, one of the prime examples of how the digital is changing the roles of heritage professionals can be seen most acutely with shifting curatorial responsibilities, which now include, among other things, digital or data curation. "I believe we have eight curators here at the GRI. So the curators build our collections, and then their act of curation is they design exhibitions [of acquisitions]. They write publications about it and now increasingly they can curate digital content, digital exhibitions, or a website about a particular collection or object that we acquired. So, in that sense, the curator's job is changing, too, because they also do digital curation" (Baca, 2013). In this way, notions of curation have expanded beyond traditional expectations within a bricks-and-mortar institution to now include how to manage data sets, how to display or represent things in online environments, and what should be communicated through social media applications.

However, it is not simply a matter of broadening job duties. According to senior program officer Anne Helmreich of the Getty Foundation, another obvious adjustment can be seen in the introduction and rewriting of entire institutional positions, titles, and departments. "[Digital media platforms] are changing the

institutions in one easy measure in that you have new job descriptions. You know, ten years ago, did museums have Web managers? Did they have social media people? The very fact in measuring change through job descriptions is an easy way to see how it is changing institutions” (Helmreich, 2013).

Take, for example, managing editor for Web and communications Liz McDermott, who maintains a position at the Getty that would not necessarily have even existed five to ten years ago. She notes with some exasperation, though, that even this new job title is already out of date because the description of managing editor implies working in a print atmosphere whereas she works with creating all sorts of digital content, editing videos, and even analyzing the online metrics.

“It’s just such different kinds of skills. I just keep going back to storytelling, but you’re using so many elements now, not just words on a piece of paper. Visually it’s all different kinds of things” (McDermott, 2013). Another important shift, she says, is that this type of role has changed the complexity of how things are communicated inside and outside the institutions. For example, McDermott notes that art historians and scholars are traditionally more isolated and solitary in conducting their research but now there are entire teams determining how to present and communicate their findings through a variety of platforms. On a fundamental level, a more nuanced dialogue is taking place about what can be created, who gets to be involved, and where should this presented and in what form?

“See, I love my job. You would think I have a nightmare job because most art historians don’t like working with other people. They like working by themselves.

They became art historians and scholars for a reason. They like to be alone in a room with books and research and presenting ideas. And it's true, but the work I do can hardly be more opposite. I'm in meetings all day working with teams of people and listening to them and talking to them, getting their input in how content is presented and what they think is important to say. Kind of acting like a bridge between people internally and then people out there externally, and how to get it out the door. So that's a big shift, a kind of cultural shift, as far as how people work together" (McDermott, 2013). A significant component to this, she adds, is that determining what should be communicated and in what format requires an understanding of the public's social media use and expectations, another very different mindset, experience, and set of skills than were previously required.

Susan Edwards, whose own position at the Getty entails developing Web content writ large, including content for the website, game development, and developing the architecture for digital and online applications such as the Scholars Workspace, thinks that this process of digital curation entails more than simply maintaining a Web presence as a conduit of communication to the people. She also poses the question as to what role the curators should play in this subsequent aggregating of digital conversations and interaction. Should they be treating their Web presence and all of their social media documentation in the same manner they would objects in their collections or are the Web managers now taking on a newfound role as curators?

"This is sort of getting into the realm of digital curation...What is it? Are we actually curators? Those of us who do technology online in building our website, are

we actually doing curation just like the curators are? Is this a new mode of production? Do we need to have curators in our digital, you know, in our institution, that [sic] do the digital curation? I think it's a really interesting question. And I'm just speaking for them now, but I see this, too, with our curators. They seem to understand that the digital space is important. They seem to understand that they need to be involved in it, and somehow working in that space is much like what they do traditionally in the galleries. But they don't really understand how and they can't quite figure out the mechanisms for doing so...They're really struggling with this, and I think part of it is that they were trained as traditional curators and this is additional work. It strains the definition of who they are in some fundamental ways" (Edwards, 2013).

Another point to be made about the dialogue being communicated through the social media applications is that new conditions need to be realized for managing those conversations if everyone is given the microphone, so to speak, to provide his/her own opinions, perspectives, and insights. While some participating members of the public may add to the conversation, others may challenge certain interpretations, or worse, just express themselves inappropriately. "And there's a whole new set of skills that go along with learning how to negotiate all that. This is what we learned from working with social media...is what happens when someone says something that offends everybody else? And you have to somehow do something. You know, you can't just ignore it. You have to say something. How do you say it? What's the tone? How do you deal with it? And usually it's all just about being honest and straightforward and communicating with people. And that is really

challenging for institutions” (Edwards, 2013).

Kylie Pine of the Willamette Heritage Center shares a similar concern when it comes to adjusting to these expanded roles of having to edit or censor other people’s points of views through social media communications, such as the comments section on her organization’s blog. A policy had to be articulated and posted restricting foul language, for example, but knowing where to draw the line or having to understand the nuances of this expanded conversation is in some ways new to the traditional directives of curators and archivists. In addition to making certain judgment calls, this also entails a lot more work and effort on the part of heritage professionals to now have to monitor these channels and screen posts, tasks that go above and beyond their normal routines.

So while a cultural heritage organization may strive to elicit participation and engagement from its public, a whole new set of criteria must go into how that communication is conducted and controlled, simply to determine the usefulness or the utility of what people are saying, particularly when dealing with incorrect information or even vocal rants. “Do I leave it as the curator of that blog? I mean, it’s valid. They had that opinion. Does it advance the narrative? Does it offend people? And do we allow people to use inflammatory language on that blog? Where does that censorship line get drawn? There are some people that definitely do comment and had been studying or would go out and find an article and help add to that narrative, but it’s kind of a mixed bag. Everything’s so nuanced here. We work in a nonprofit environment so we’re dependent on our existence on people liking us and not making anyone angry with us because we rely on that support to be able to go

forward. So it gets sticky. It gets political. It gets frustrating on some levels, too” (Pine, 2013).

According to Baca of the GRI, another challenge for cultural heritage institutions is how to find people who are qualified to occupy these emerging roles necessary to conduct an ambitious digital agenda. “We did manage to get approved a new position here at the GRI that has not existed before... it’s a digital humanities specialist. A lot of applicants are completely unqualified to be doing this, but two of the things we’re asking for is a master’s in information science or computer science and a master’s or preferably a PhD in art history. That’s asking a lot. Because you can’t divorce the technology from the content, so you can’t just get somebody that’s an expert in that, is a technology expert, without any subject matter expertise because there is a difference in doing the scholarly computing for the humanities and the scholarly computing for the hard sciences. It’s a whole different problem set. So these are the kinds of jobs and skill sets that are starting to emerge and the people we need like this” (Baca, 2013).

Another application of expertise that Baca highlights is how technology can be used to give its scholars the capability to amplify their research through such mechanisms as expert social tagging. While she does not anticipate the public having the opportunity to tag digital objects with identifying information, she does hope that the GRI’s advanced researchers who participate in the Residential Scholars Program will have the capacity to provide expert social tagging and build the item level and library catalog record through the development and implementation of such an application. “One of the things I’ve been saying for years,

if we had a social tagging application, all these residential scholars who come here every year, who are pouring through all these materials in Special Collections, if there was an app where they could easily write what they know about that thing, it would greatly enhance the amount of knowledge that is accrued around these objects. We don't have the labor and the expertise to have item level cataloging on every single thing we've got. But if we could easily capture what the scholars who are here consulting on the materials know or are discovering it would be a huge advance for us" (Baca, 2013).

While Baca hopes to see such expanded capabilities offered during her tenure at the Getty, she admits that this will also require a technical staff dedicated to the development of such applications. "The problem with technology projects is that they're not easy. They are all very labor intensive and we have so many other projects, very ambitious projects. And, believe it or not, we've had massive budget cuts in the last few years because of the economic downturn, so that we don't have a team of catalogers cataloging everything. We do have an information systems department here in the GRI. They're very expert but they don't actually have the time to build a social tagging application and run all these other databases they're running. So I don't know if it's going to happen" (Baca, 2013).

In a similar vein to how Baca envisions using the expertise, skills, and contributions of Getty's residential scholars to provide more input to the collection catalog, Rick Prelinger of the Prelinger Library and Archive envisions maintaining both a physical and digital collection of cultural artifacts through a combined exchange of labor from volunteer groups and trained film archivists. In fact, he



developed a volunteer group where, in exchange for volunteering for a few hours a week, people could get trained from classically trained film archivists. One of the reasons he sees the need for a combination of volunteers and experts to assist in the preservation of both analog and digital materials is that the backlogs aren't shrinking, they're growing exponentially, and smaller organizations are struggling with how to keep up with this vastly expanding corpus of historical material and the demand to save and archive it.

“When you think of there's billions of feeds of analog film that nobody has the time or money or resources to look at...the only way that I think we can address these analog backlogs is to deal with ordinary people: volunteers, para-professionals. Let them come into the back of the archive and look at that stuff and process it. We can't wait for trained professional staff to do it. There just will never be the money. Regular archivists don't like their jobs turning into...don't like volunteers and interns diluting their job security. But on the other hand, when you let people in the back of the archives to touch material, as it happens in the library and in our film archive, a seed is planted that could result in the archival material becoming part of public speech again, and maybe the volunteer group is the first step toward that and that's what we have to do” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

As further evidence of these new roles of participation, Boni cites his own involvement as a volunteer for the Prelinger Film Archive. While he was formally trained in a film archive, he notes that not all of the participants come from an archive or film background. This sets a different standard and a distinctly different tone compared to other institutions, he says, which may also translate into new

perspectives being brought to bear on the collection that are not so entrenched in institutional thinking. "It's not so exclusive. And I think a lot of archives are more, well, the gate is more tightly locked perhaps, so I think it's different here. Pretty much anybody who's shared a genuine interest of checking out this collection and being a part of it has been allowed to participate" (Boni, 2013).

Another challenge that Prelinger underscores is what approach heritage professionals must assume in the face of new participants and this mass of information with which they are presented. Will they need to become more involved or will new approaches of relinquishing responsibility need to be determined? Will their primary role still be curating or will they be reduced to simply selecting or being replaced by technology in the digital curation process? "A lot of people use the term 'curation' instead of 'selection' or rather than 'cataloging' because the flood of digital material, speaking from just the library archival viewpoint, is so great you can't tap a fire hose, as I'd like to say. And digital curation is almost a means of saying, 'Okay, look, we're not going to be able to...the machines are going to do the collecting; the machines will do a lot of the cataloging and create metadata. What we need to do is curate it.' So in a sense, it's an engagement that involves stepping back. Triage, think of it as" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Thus, in looking at the variety of ways in which the roles of cultural heritage are shifting as a result of digital heritage platforms, one thing seems apparent - that it continues to be a work in progress. It is clear that there is much more uncertainty than certainty as cultural heritage professionals and participants re-evaluate their corollary positions in the process of digital heritage.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION VERSUS CURATORIAL AUTHORITY**

One significant strand of thinking that emerges from discussions with respondents in this study has to do with the enhanced position of the public and their expectations in digital heritage. The potential for increased public participation through digital platforms, peer-to-peer network access, and social media applications seems to warrant shifting attitudes regarding who should be the arbiter of authority in privileging cultural heritage. This can be interpreted as a nascent struggle between traditional notions of curatorial authority, where curators and cultural heritage professionals determine what should be collected, preserved, exhibited, as well as how it should be interpreted, and a growing refrain for democratization that concedes to the public a larger role in those same decisions. The following include various perspectives that vacillate between these two boundaries and demonstrate how digital platforms are perceived as either eroding curatorial authority, promoting democratization, or requiring a new model that hovers somewhere between.

Anja Foerschner of the Getty Research Institute thinks that it is a scary moment for cultural heritage institutions now that digital platforms make it easier for the public to weigh in on the explanations and interpretations. As a result, she says, curators may in fact have to start giving more considerations to those other voices that weren't a part of the conversation before social media applications, in terms of what people are saying they're looking for in the selection, preservation, and exhibition of objects. "I admire curators who can bridge this gap and can work

in between those two 'high culture' and 'popular culture' poles. I mean there will always be, no matter in which direction you go, there will always be harsh criticism because you are either too traditional or too popular....I mean those notions will change over time because I think we are still in this transition period" (Foerschner, 2013).

Foerschner explains further that understanding the complex nature of this milieu can be a difficult balance for a curator to present their work, meet the needs of those expecting the classical museum experience, and satisfy the expectations of those who engage with a museum through their various devices or because they have a Facebook page. What she thinks is critical to this balancing act for curators is being aware of the voices and knowing how to connect both ends of the spectrum. However, she still feels strongly that curatorial authority has its place in the process. "I would say it is nice to have it, to a certain point, to dissolve this boundary between the high culture museum audience and the popular cultural people. I mean artists have always, at least since the 1960s, have kind of fought to integrate art into everyday culture. So I would hope that curators do take it into account. Of course you can't only, I mean, at some point you still need the authority or the guts to decide whether some information is valuable for you [as a curator] or your project in that context or not. Of course, it takes a lot of strength and being convinced to make that decision, communicate it, and stick to it. Those are the two sides of increasing public participation: you get more critical dialogue, which is very valuable, but you need to have a very strong ability to observe, to select" (Foerschner, 2013).

But while she sees a continued need for curatorial authority, Foerschner is well aware that digital social platforms like the Scholars' Workspace, for example, are changing what curators have traditionally done because of the more immediate way of interacting with people and collaborating on a topic. "You also have to open up to more points of views, more approaches, but also to different aspects that you probably were not familiar with, like technological aspects, working with technology, the Internet, this and that" (Foerschner, 2013).

Anne Helmreich of the Getty Foundation reiterates that while they remain central to the heritage process, curators also have to defer some of their authority to technology specialists as they incorporate more digital means for special projects or conveying information in this richer media landscape. "The selection of what the catalog or these projects would contain or how they would look are normally driven by the curators because they know the objects and they know what needs to accompany the objects to explain them. I would say in these projects the curators have still been the main drivers. But one thing that we've learned is that if you pair the curator up with the technologists early on in the process, the technologists are often able to say to the curator, 'Did you know you could do this?' And the curators were asking the technologists, 'Well, I've always wanted to do this, could I do this?'" (Helmreich, 2013). This demonstrates an increasing reliance on technical staff to define what can be produced in digital heritage, further diluting the authority of curators.

According to Helmreich, some of these digital projects also invite more public participation and are not just designed according to what kinds of content the

curator wants to have included. One example she points to involved a collaboration between the Art Institute of Chicago and the Indianapolis Museum of Art on an online catalog that was beta tested by a larger user pool with feedback invited in a controlled way. “You know, they had focus groups come in and use the site and then have a dialog with it. So it is kind of dependent on the way the institution wants it to work. But that user design or user interface was a really important part. It is really up to the prerogative of the institution.” (Helmreich, 2013).

Another example she highlighted was how the Seattle Art Museum wanted a feature in their catalog that allows a defined community of users and other scholars to comment and annotate. “So the desire on the part of the curator is to develop a comment function so that he could invite other scholars, not necessarily art historians but literary scholars, to look at the translations and the interpretations [in this case of text in Chinese scroll paintings] so they could offer their own responses. Eventually those could be culled through and then added to the catalog entry, which I think goes to the point about it being dynamic and updateable that can then over time say, ‘here’s our translation, but scholar x, y, and z have suggested this is better translated as this.’ The catalog then becomes a space of intellectual debate” (Helmreich, 2013).

Even with limited audience participation, Helmreich says the implication of these examples shows that some institutions are referring more to the public and relinquishing their authoritative role in what should be highlighted or exhibited. “I just think that social media allows museums to fine tune that audience engagement. But museums have been really interested in engaging with the public for decades

now. I think that there's always been this measured way of doing it. What the public might be fascinated with, a curator might find that very limiting. I mean, they may decide that we don't really need another exhibit on Monet's paintings, even though everybody loves Monet. If you want to propose an exhibition it needs to be a contribution to scholarship. The curators face a really tricky task to try to come up with things that meet the desires of the public but are also a contribution to scholarship. I mean there are lots of jokes in our field about how the best exhibition would be Monet and the Blood of Kings and mummies, all in one. People love ritual sacrifice, they love Monet, and they love mummies. So you'd get the biggest exhibition attendance ever. I'm not discounting what the public is interested in but a museum is in charge of preserving a collection and interpreting them, and is also part of a scholarly record, so you need to be constantly contributing to that record in ways that are moving the field forward" (Helmreich, 2013).

It is this struggle to meet the needs of the public and hold on to its own prerogatives that has many heritage institutions asking themselves just how far to go in letting the public use these platforms to contribute. So even though there is a sense of democratization from cultural institutions wanting more public participation, they still have not quite figured out where to demarcate where that begins and ends. Albrezzi points to the Scholars Workspace of the Getty Research Institute, particularly the prototype Digital Mellini project, as a prime example of this. "There has been a lot of discussion about how much of this, once it's published, whatever that means, once it's on the Web, how much of this will be open to the public in terms of feedback, continuation of research. I mean, how do we expect that

to go on and, even in terms of creating these types of technologies for people to do their research, how open should that be, how much direction should you give?” (Albrezzi, 2013).

Several complex questions about identity also emerge at the heart of determining just how much the public should participate in cultural heritage through digital platforms. Even if it’s not necessarily the public contributing – it could be scholars or other representatives of the cultural heritage community – there are still more opportunities to challenge any notion of single interpretations. According to Baca of the GRI, having multiple voices in the mix can be particularly important in cultural heritage because even interpretations among cultural heritage scholars are not always agreed upon. “Humanities data is notoriously idiosyncratic. Scientific data can be pretty cut and dry or mathematical data. Math is math. Two and two equals four. It always equals four. Whereas in art history you can say: Well, there’s this painting and some scholar thinks it was by this painter and a lot of other scholars think it was by another painter. And then there’s this whole other group of scholars that think it was actually by somebody different. So there’s no one right answer. There could be three right answers. And how do you manage that?” (Baca, 2013). This concern is multiplied in a networked environment because more people can annotate or contribute to that narration, expanding the meaning. The question then becomes, who exactly is providing their perspective and how is their interpretation received?

Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department posits that the public’s perceptions and contributions still don’t hold weight compared to those



within the field of cultural heritage. “Well, this is the sticky-wicket that gets me, that I don’t understand frankly, that you ask any scholar, any curator or scholar: Is it best to have a discourse around what you’re doing, to talk to your colleagues, to test your ideas and your theories on your colleagues, get feedback, make it stronger, and enrichen the discourse around whatever it is you’re studying? Every single one of them would say, ‘Yes, of course.’ But then when you sit down and you actually say, ‘Okay, here’s someone who has another interpretation...Joe, who lives over in Culver City, who has another interpretation of this object.’ They just don’t want to listen to it, and they’re offended and, you know, ‘This guy doesn’t know art history. He’s not an art historian. I’m not even going to listen to it.’ So this I don’t get. I frankly don’t get it” (Edwards, 2013).

This notion of specialization is not one that is unique to cultural heritage. In the field of journalism, for instance, there are questions about whether bloggers should be considered journalists or if other citizen journalists deserve the same recognition/protection as those who went through specific schooling or who work for established media outlets. It is the digital that forces this conversation in many ways because it is no longer a one-way transmission with high barriers of access. But Edwards wonders about the relationship between the personal and the institutional identities related to professions. Should one be given more support and sanction by being associated with an institution, she asks, or can someone be considered just as valid based on their own merit? Edwards refers to prominent art blogger Tyler Green as an example of someone who knows how to write well, make a good argument, and market himself, so much so that he is now on par with

established art critics like Christopher Knight of the *L.A. Times* and some of the *New York Times* journalists. “And this is something that I think resonates a lot with the younger generation. Like ‘Talk to me as a person. Don’t tell me. Don’t throw at me that you’re this institution and therefore I should listen to you.’ We get this a lot with social media. They don’t want the institutional voice” (Edwards, 2013).

This tendency to seek out voices beyond the institution speaks volumes about public expectations, particularly for users of digital platforms and social media applications. Edwards proposes that, though not necessarily a generational thing, there is evidence that younger members of the public are expecting to get heritage information on their phones, communicate with people on social media, be able to go on the blog, and leave comments. What they don’t want is another layer of gatekeepers that tells them their comments will be reviewed.

What Rick Prelinger of the Prelinger Library and Archive finds so interesting about this consumer-demand side of the digital humanities is that there seems to be a potential for “this interesting kind of fusion between academic discourse and mass culture” (Prelinger, R., 2013). Though he is not certain if the transmission is going to rise up from the bottom or down from the top, referring to Jenkins’ (2006) *Convergence Culture*, he does believe that the channels of the social media will be used to drive the conversations that are autonomously generated by the public. “I quite often think that I’ve never lived in a culturally more exciting time, and part of it is because of this distribution of authorities so that authority is almost meaningless now. And the fact that...media is so decentralized and that sometimes every few days you’ll see something somebody does somewhere that is so amazing

and so smart and you think, 'Thank god for the Internet.' On the other hand, it's so fragile. It's based on an infrastructure that's built on non-renewable energy, and it's built on a lot of leisure time. And it's built on a sense of...people have a sense of entitlement to speak that they didn't have before" (Prelinger, 2013).

But Prelinger also wonders whether all of this digital will come to represent the official, sacramental, high-end form of discourse or simply be the vulgar, common form of expression. He worries that maybe it is in these networked environments where populations will be herded into pens and controlled. Despite these concerns, Prelinger recognizes that social use of these platforms will only continue to grow exponentially and encompass a wider variety of articulations. "I'm more curious about the scale...like where does it flatten out so that it just becomes ordinary pace of life? Does it accelerate? In other words, do more people start to express themselves online or just reference the expressions of other people? Does life become like Tumblr but with a million notes instead of a thousand for a big post? What happens when the rest of the world goes online and is drawn into the discourse?" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Albrezzi of the GRI points out that despite the seemingly endless flow of materials being uploaded, contributed, commented on, and shared, there is still a curated process that is managed by some authority. Whatever is deemed worthy can be edited or used as historical data. Even in this digital revolution, she says, social media output is controlled by programmers or algorithms. For Albrezzi, there will always be some form of curatorial authority over what is selected, preserved, and exhibited, even if it is just determining what information will be saved on what

servers.

MacDonald of the Internet Archive implies that we should already be thinking of machines as the new curators. In doing so, he believes we can both keep curatorial authority intact and achieve democratization even as more people have the ability to contribute their own materials. “Everyone can now be a publisher or commentator. Everyone can now share their own lives, their own perspectives. Having media memory more readily accessible allows others to share their own perspectives and analysis. Having media not only more accessible but can also be transformed, where computer scientists can provide insight where only before was the provenance of only sociologists or historians who were limited by the human capacity of how much a human can review. How deep can a human go? How much can a human integrate? Computers can now leverage an individual’s capabilities to access and interpret our cultural heritage. You don’t need to have museums anymore to preserve it. Curatorial insight is hugely powerful and I don’t want to see that diminished. But I’d love to see that enriched. Having an individual take part in that machine-mediated curatorial experience....the more that people interact with media in a thoughtful fashion, would only enrich the metadata, the machine understanding of what people are doing, seeing, watching....the better that will be for machine intelligence working as a more powerful tool at the hands of professional curators and the democratization of curators” (MacDonald, 2014).

Stefano Boni would like to see a more measured form of democratization occur in cultural heritage, where the public can contribute more and add to the narrative, as long as an official or original version remains intact. This is an

important distinction for Boni, as his role at the Prelinger Film Archive entails entering vital data about home movies that are being digitized for the collection. Once films have been scanned, volunteers such as Boni rewind the films, make sure there is a record for them, store them in archival boxes, and make sure the information is entered in a database. Sometimes this involves repairing or cleaning the films, if necessary. But the primary goal is that the films are digitized and the analog copy preserved. With all of this work, he welcomes input from members of the public that will help to identify or explain the significance of films in the collection.

At the same time, he thinks that a certain level of curatorial authority should exist if only based on the information that is acquired and documented by the volunteers of the Prelinger Archive. "In this space, basically our goal is to treat the film best we can, get it into shape where we can have it scanned so that it can be uploaded, and get to that point where people can comment on it, identify things. That's how I see it....people adding to it. With any item like in an archive, you typically have...there's some chronology about where it's been, the provenance, so I think in a way it's sort of similar. You might not be talking about the physical object if it's online, but you're talking about the content and people adding to it their experience or what they recognize in it. I think it adds to it. I think it's important to retain that information that we discover here in this space. But at the same time, I think it's also beneficial to have other people's input. I'm thinking in terms of like from an archival standpoint where you want to have as accurate information as possible. But we don't always have all the information and certainly not with

content. A lot of the times...we're putting into the database...whatever's written on the container, if there is information. So, yes, I think it's important to have the additional information that people would be getting from the content, from what they view. But it's also important that that original information from here is preserved" (Boni, 2013).

Boni also points out that there's another indicator of curatorial authority, which he says deals with the decision-making process about what should be kept, what we look back on, and what we are going to do with it. To illustrate this fact, he points out that what is decided to be important and how it can be used goes through multiple layers of gatekeepers – the people who donate films for the archive; the volunteers who compile information; Prelinger as the curator, who decides what to post or show in his digital screenings; and the Internet Archive, which provides the platform for searching, viewing, repurposing, and sharing.

Another option for considering curatorial authority deals with the identity of the institution itself. For example, while embracing the broader access of digital platforms, the Getty Research Institute clings tightly to its standing as an authoritative arbiter of art history, whereas the Prelinger Library and Archive positions itself as an appropriation space with few barriers of access, giving much more credence to user agency than trying to maintain itself as an authoritative voice. In a slightly different vein, the Willamette Cultural Heritage Center maintains a mission of authority while doing so through the contributions and voices of its community members.

According to Pine of the Willamette Cultural Heritage Center, this creates a

certain tension, a tenuous balancing act between preservation and interpretation, when it comes to maintaining the history and cultural heritage of a region. “There’s a didactic element that we’re teaching and we’re actively trying to teach people about their history. But there’s also — and I think it’s becoming more apparent in more recent years — the idea of being a forum and the idea that people come and they talk about it. Instead of us shoving history down someone’s throat, we want people to come here and discover for themselves. It’s less about us being, in the traditional sense, a curator where we know everything about the history here, but rather pulling these different threads out and looking more towards multi-local perspectives. Knowing that your history and my history, even though we may live in the same town, don’t necessarily gel, and what’s true for me may not be true for you. There’s a lot more emphasis on that. So some of the ways we’re doing that here, physically in our space, is we’re inviting people to come in and tell their own stories” (Pine, 2013).

Pine describes a case in point at the Willamette Cultural Heritage Center, where rather than having an exhibit of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde presented through the research of curators, they had members of the tribes come in and tell their own stories from their own perspectives, including a much more participatory element expressed in both the exhibit space and through its digital platforms. Pine explains that another way the heritage center has flipped the curatorial role on its head is by changing the dynamic in which curators reveal more of their own decision-making process rather than simply being this voice of authority. After all, she explains, museums are one of the few places in academia

where a label on the wall in an exhibit can explain something without having to cite sources.

While Pine does not advocate that curators relinquish their influence of expertise and scholarship entirely, she does assert that how they come to their conclusions might be open for a wider debate when the public is allowed more flexibility to communicate their own perspectives. She cites a trend in some art museums that provide blank labels next to objects and invite the public to provide their own perspectives or meaning. While Pine thinks that can be useful in some cases, she stresses that in other cases there is more benefit from having someone who studied that subject provide understanding, knowledge, and context that would not be available just from the conclusions provided by members of the public. But, again, she says the question remains unanswered about just how much flexibility and agency the public should have in this process. “So I think there’s a very fine line that we’re walking between free for all, anybody’s opinion is valid, and then the true scholarship area. It’s a struggle for museums. I think they’re trying to come to terms with it” (Pine, 2013).

Willamette Cultural Heritage Center volunteer Sandy Bond thinks that the more the public is allowed to become involved through digital platforms, the more there is an opportunity for interactive knowledge and communities of interest to have a two-way conversation about what people want to see and share. This in turn can also generate interest for people to take advantage of the resources made available by cultural heritage institutions.

Willamette Heritage Center development director Amy Vandergrift points



out that the networked capabilities of digital heritage platforms also allow for more common threads of knowledge to be shared, including from other historical organizations, which furthers the conversation beyond any one institutional voice of authority. To Heather Jovanelli, a volunteer for the Prelinger Library, the capacity for interconnectedness and sharing means that the role of gatekeeper is no longer based solely on the personal judgments and decisions of curators. The more the public uses social media applications to interact with digital content, search things out, comment on, or repurpose material in some other way, the more interpretations will emerge from that participation. “I’m sure a lot of these bigger institutions are trying to figure out how to deal with some of these social media applications in their exhibits...that does open up a lot of opportunities for dialogue” (Jovanelli, 2014).

Adam F. Scott of the Art Institute of Chicago acknowledges that this debate will not soon go away or have any clear answers. According to Scott, this moment of transition we are experiencing, brought on by the capabilities of digital heritage platforms, means that just how much the public can participate will continue to evolve and proliferate. As a result, he argues, this only furthers the need for some form of curatorial authority to make sense of it all. Otherwise, he asks, without such expert guidance will we all simply be curating our own experiences? “One thing you can say objectively is that everyone becomes a curator, everyone can curate their own experience. In a way, people have always been doing that. When you go into someone’s house, it’s a curated experience. But now people can turn that outward for everyone to see. Whether it’s Facebook, MySpace or Pinterest, it is a curating of

the self, which has become radically normalized behavior. The value judgment is that the technological digital platforms that everyone is plugging into and curating from makes everything normalized behavior, actually reducing heightened experience, and flattens the human condition. If everyone can upload everything then everything just gets watered down. Invariably, if you go into an antique store and there's a tub of old photos they are interesting for the first few minutes, but minutes later you experience a sort of undifferentiated overload. If there is a vast deluge of everyone uploading everything to a museological or institutional setting, a museum of everything, where you can add comments, upload images, express memories, and provide anecdotes, that probably gives people a feeling of access and power, a sense of democratization, which is great. What people choose or select through this radical freedom and access to upload histories and things would be novel. But the final product might not be particularly interesting. What is worse is how would you be able to wrap your head around such an undifferentiated flow? Expanding the cultural narrative is a byproduct of this. Even the idea of privileging would likely get very complicated. If you suddenly give people all this freedom and access, how would they use it and who will sift through this deluge of stuff? It seems kind of dizzying. So while this radical democratization of inclusiveness gives you a lot of quantity, it could also lead to a mass delusion because if everything is deemed important then nothing is important, if everything is platformed then nothing is interesting. Everyone can plug in but it does mess with ideas of specialization. Wrapped up in this notion of digitization is that everyone can be an expert, everyone can upload everything they want to share, but who's sitting back and

considering what this all means? It is interesting, this idea of crowdsourcing as curation, but even museums that allow that kind of participation are still doing things through their own rubric. They are in essence meta-curating and manage that on some level. That is why I still appreciate those who've dedicated their lives to the curatorial impulse. I would still hope there would be someone who has spent a lot of time thinking about the ramifications of such things to cull and curate, to come up with interesting juxtapositions, to open up possible new meanings, to reframe or re-contextualize, or to just complicate the memory of these things. So the question becomes whether the people want radical inclusion or interesting viewpoints? Maybe future institutions will exist simultaneously that offer expert viewpoints and others just for inclusiveness. They don't necessarily have to trump each other. They can contrast each other. While some of these institutions see themselves as guardians of culture, others may take a more Dadaist approach of creative anarchy. While one does not allow for the changing of the system, the other might allow for more customizable histories, which creates the dichotomy between archivists and makers. The problem is that without gatekeepers, nothing is interesting, and with a dictatorship of gatekeepers, no one gets in" (Scott, 2013).

What this indicates is that while notions of democratization do not necessarily completely undermine or destabilize curatorial authority in the shifting landscape of digital cultural heritage, there can be little doubt that the position of the public and the authority of the institution are being deeply considered in terms of who will have the final word about what and how we choose to remember.

## RECONCEPTUALIZING INSTITUTIONAL THINKING AND PRACTICE

The last discursive theme presented in this chapter involves another significant shift in thinking, which can be measured in how cultural heritage institutions are being challenged to re-define themselves and their conventional approaches to participatory remembering. Having already presented evolving concepts of access, dynamic evidence, formative roles, and interpretive authority in digital cultural heritage, a lingering conversation that deserves further attention concerns the re-thinking of institutional identity and function in an attempt to remain relevant in the rapidly changing, networked media landscape. While this may seem like an unsurprising turn in the face of such externalities, some of the reflexive and procedural strategies for adjusting to these changing conditions deserve additional exploration.

One of the ways in which cultural heritage institutions are trying to adapt their iterative thinking for how to reposition themselves involves a systematic turn toward increased transparency. An indication that this is occurring is revealed in how these memory institutions are increasingly inviting the public to have a peak behind the curtains at the decision-making apparatuses and become more engaged in the construction of knowledge.

Anja Foerschner of the Getty Research Institute highlights this move toward increasing transparency as being vital to developing new relationships to the work and for making the public more informed about the interpretive process. “Most of the time the public only sees the final result and not all the different aspects that led

to it. I think that when you communicate those work processes, which is a huge part of the digital media and the participatory media, then you become more aware of them, which I think is a very good thing because it's not only the final product that matters...You post something on your blog or work in the Scholars' Workspace, you communicate more steps along the way and...from that new aspects can evolve" (Foerschner, 2013).

Foerschner's point is made even more salient when she describes several projects she is working on. One involves making image comparisons and the other is developing an interactive timeline. What more is learned when the public sees what went into making these projects, how the ideas were researched and developed, rather than just being exposed to the finished products? By making the entire process more transparent, perhaps the public is privileged with more unpredictable or unexpected sources of knowledge.

Helmreich agrees that one of the effects that digital platforms and social media applications have on cultural heritage institutions such as the Getty Research Institute is that they must now be more transparent and forthcoming about what was always happening. "I think it's changing how institutions are understood or position themselves. So I think that museums are just participating in this larger trend of multiple channels for communication and the kind of decentralization of authority. It used to be that you might not even know who a curator of a collection was. They were this anonymous person who wrote the labels in this kind of universal voice, right? But, say with the Getty Voices project, it is inviting you to say, okay, here's Julian Brooks, he's the [associate] curator of drawings, and here's what

he does when he goes on a research trip. It is giving you what I would call behind-the-scenes content. So that notion of the museum as this kind of transcendent presence with this kind of universalizing authority, I think it is kind of moving away from that to say, 'well, we're an institution made up of people just like any other institution and these are the people responsible for the choices they make about the objects. They get passionate about certain things just like the rest of us and that's why an exhibition comes about, because somebody feels passionate and committed to a particular idea.' So it's allowing the institution to be rather than a mono voice it is allowing it to be poly vocal. Which, I think, it has always been. The scholarship that happens in a museum is like any other kind of scholarship. I mean it's a debate with your peers in the field. You build upon what your peers have done. So it's never been truly one voice. It just might have appeared that way. It just hasn't necessarily communicated that back out to the public. So I think that multiple voices has always been there but it is now just being more transparent about it and then using social media to enhance it in ways that don't require people to make a trip to a bricks-and-mortar institution" (Helmreich, 2013).

Albrezzi of the GRI also notes that this type of transparency is not always just about being able to see who is doing what or how certain products or exhibits were created. In fact, she argues there are so many other aspects that deserve more attention, such as the meetings, the conversations, and other activities typically hidden from the public's view, and that one of the best methods for disseminating these experiences is through their various digital platforms. "It is more about giving access to the behind-the-scenes that are going on here, the kinds of discussions or

panel discussions, scholarly gatherings, that kind of thing. What the research is and what the work is making that available to those who want it. Giving greater access. Not everyone can get to the Getty to see every symposium that we do but we're trying to make those more and more available through YouTube channels" (Albrezzi, 2013).

The Getty also uses its blog, 'Getty Voices,' where members of each department write articles about various subjects as a way to spark conversations, talk about interpretive processes, or highlight new programs. While Edwards alludes to some internal resistance to this project from certain departments, she also notes that it is a project sanctioned by the CEO of the institution and there's increasing participation because of a perceived need for more transparency using digital platforms and social media. "It's pretty much become de facto accepted in the museum community that you have to have a social media presence. You have to have some sort of engagement there in order to be relevant anymore. So it's shifted the way we communicate in a totally fundamental way, and that's from a larger institutional point of view. When I first started working here, I had to beg people to put stuff online. I had to actively go out and be really nosy, and try to find out what other people are working on, and then try to figure out what would work online, and then go to that person and lobby them. I don't have to do that anymore. So there's been this shift, actually since our new CEO said he wants us to be leaders in technology" (Edwards, 2013).

Another outcome to this assumption of transparency could also dispel certain stereotypes regarding cultural heritage institutions being implacably

conservative or even curators themselves being too single-minded, rigid in their thinking, or somehow acting alone on their pet projects. Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department suggests that while conversations for how to address these stereotypical notions occur in any institution, the social media are increasingly playing out those discussions in a more public fashion. “I think it’s the stereotype to think that [curators] go off into their office and create an exhibition [by saying], ‘This is my vision, and I’m going to make it happen.’ There is a huge team of people who work in putting together an exhibition, and there’s a conversation that happens between the curator and the designer and the prep, and then the person who’s conserving the work, and the educators about what this is. But this is an internal conversation within the institution, so I think they’re not uncomfortable with having conversations about their stuff and being and changing and being flexible. It’s just something about stepping outside in the general public and the masses or something that is really intimidating....But I think holes are being poked in this every day. And I’ve been here for 12 years, and I have seen the change, so it’s happening” (Edwards, 2013).

Another indication of change within the institutional mindset and process is a move toward the gamification of cultural heritage. According to Edwards, the Getty has made it a priority to develop numerous mobile and online multiplayer games, and to lesser extent applications (apps) for mobile phones. “Yeah, it’s becoming huge right now. It’s been there, burbling all along, in the last year. It’s a hot thing. You either want to have built an app for your museum or you want a game. Those are the two hot things and, I mean, I guess the gamification thing is also



making games more like everyday life in a way. People already play games a lot so why not play games in the museum?" (Edwards, 2013).

Edwards has been working on game development for the Getty ever since she started working there, even though she does not identify herself as being a gamer. One of the games the Getty offers is called *Switch*, which allows users to explore the museum using a mobile phone. The Getty also developed an online educational virtual space, literally a virtual Getty Museum, through a collaboration with the virtual world of *Whyville*. This online and virtual educational space offers two games – a multiplayer card matching game and a treasure hunt game. The Getty later developed its own card matching and memory games. The first allows users to race against each other to match cards based on subjects like medium, paintings, photography, drawings, portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. The second game is more of a find-the-difference sort of game that allows users to compare original images with those that have been altered.

Edwards says one of the interesting uses of this find-the-difference game is that they've built the game so that users can look at altered pictures on their phones and then compare them to the real pictures in the museum galleries. However, Edwards explains that their development of apps at the Getty has been minimal, with the exceptions of an audio tour for an exhibition and a handbook of the collection. Some of the problems with apps, she points out, is they are often pay-wall guarded, you have to buy them on the iTunes store, they're hard to code, and they require proprietary coding language. These are just some of the reasons the Getty has embraced more mobile Web games.

“Mobile Web can be accessed via on the Internet. If you have a browser on your phone, you can access it from anywhere. You don’t have to buy it. There’s no paywall. It’s free. With iTunes, there’s a whole approval process. They can deny your stuff for any reason. They don’t usually for cultural institutions, but they have been known to censor some other stuff. So there’s a little bit of not wanting to get involved in that. Plus, IOS stuff only work on I-products. And I know now several of us in my group have a big issue with requiring people to buy this really big expensive piece of hardware in order to see our material, right? We’re supposed to be free, and the whole mission is to teach people about art for free. And we’re going to create something that requires you to buy a \$700 iPad? That just doesn’t seem right” (Edwards, 2013). With those restrictions of mobile apps in mind, the Getty has developed a much larger menu of its mobile Web offerings, including a mobile version of its website. In 2013, the Getty rolled out its business section, with others to follow, using responsive design, where the page design reflows as screen sizes change.

The Willamette Heritage Center, which does not have the staff size, technical expertise, or funding sources that the Getty has at its disposal, has also tried its hand at gamification. The Willamette Heritage Center has done a live-action re-enactment of the popular *Oregon Trail* computer game, promoted and updated through their social media platforms, that collection manager and archivist Kylie Pine admits has a whimsical element, complete with roller derby girls.

“It’s beloved among the targeted audience that we’ve been trying to attract, which is young, professional people from their 20s to 35. We don’t get those visitors

very much. So it's been very successful in bringing those people in. But there's a little bit of a tongue-in-cheek thing that we do with it. We work with the roller derby girls. They become the rapids, and they run around on their roller skates with blue noodles and hit people, and you have to protect your leg and paper wagon as you go through ten challenges. So there's an element of talking about history, but there's also an element of getting hit by wet noodles by roller derby girls. It's awesome, right? But it's fun, and it's engaging. Is this really teaching about the Oregon Trail? Now, I would argue that it is because it was fun. That's a really big change. It's trying to stay relevant, stay fresh, and trying to do the impossible, which is preserve things so that people could see them in the future but also make them accessible" (Pine, 2013).

There are other practical choices that cultural heritage institutions have always had to make regarding their physical collections in terms of archiving, preservation, and space. With the movement towards digitization and the subsequent proliferation of digital material, some of those considerations have been cast in a new light and are informed by changes to their systems brought on by this new digital reality. For instance, cultural heritage institutions must now consider on what servers digital content and data should be stored. What are the costs and economic viability for such digitization and storage? Or how do their institutional decisions take into account the relevance or permanence of the new technologies they employ to collect, manage, or display this digital content?

Megan Prelinger of the Prelinger Library sheds some light on these decisions as she discusses how she builds her collection of cultural ephemera and in what

ways this turn toward the digital impact the practicalities of what items in her physical collection she will privilege for shelf space or that will maintain a longer shelf-life. Prelinger explains that nearly 60 percent of her collection was hand-picked from library discards or materials public libraries were de-accessioning in the late 1990s. She says that this was a result of libraries consolidating, digitizing their collections, or making room for digital spaces, such as computer centers, while public funding at the time was also contracting. As a result of libraries shedding so much material they deemed unessential or irrelevant, Prelinger indicates that her own collection mushroomed and has only continued to grow over the past 10-15 years. However, as her physical collection began to overflow the shelves, it quickly became evident that limited space meant that she would need to also seriously consider the potentials of digitization and how to decide what stays and what goes digital.

“If something is not visual, if it’s just text, it’s less important for us to keep it, the more important for us to make room for things that cannot be digitized, have not been digitized, and are unlikely in the near future to ever be digitized like Zine libraries and photo archives — really fragile pamphlet literature, that kind of thing. So every time we make a decision of what to take off the shelves in order to make room for something new, we now take digital collections into consideration when deciding what to keep in a way that we didn’t really....You know, for instance we used to have a run of the Patent Office Gazette of the U.S. Patent Office — a hundred years of it, with beautiful, fragile paper with a little drawing of every object patented for hundred years. It was just magical to browse. It was also truly enormous. It took

up three whole banks, and it got digitized. And once it was digitized, we had to look very critically at what else we could do with those three banks. Ultimately, we took that off the shelf, gave it to the Internet Archive, and used the space to acquire a Zine library of 70 boxes of handmade Zines from the 80s and 90s and 2000s” (Prelinger, M., 2013).

According to Prelinger, the institutional partnership with the Internet Archive has allowed for the digitization of approximately eight percent of their collection, something like 3,800 analog books that have been scanned and are indexed in the online digital corpus. However, their partnership with the Internet Archive is an essential part of their planning and access because funding for the Prelinger Library does not allow for a separate infrastructure to house a digital environment. So for the Prelingers the question has always been how to best develop their collection, privilege their analog materials, and remain 100 percent in support of digital initiatives. “One of the things that makes this collection valuable, and not monetarily valuable but culturally valuable, is its density and the fact that we’re not out to rescue print. We are out to shape a particular eye on historical memory, and that goal is served by a tighter, denser collection rather than one that sprawls” (Prelinger, M., 2013). That is why, Prelinger explains, they made the decision to foreground the physical process of browsing in their library space while still allowing for a hybrid analog and digital system of access and distribution.

The Willamette Heritage Center similarly wants to embrace broader digital initiatives but also must face certain practical realities in its decision-making. Development director Vandergrift refers to an exhibition program called the

Heritage Implementational, where the Willamette Heritage Center invites local history organizations across several local counties to participate in a themed exhibit. For example, one year the theme was “childhood” and some groups used their collections to focus on childhood deaths and mourning, child labor, or children in state institutions. According to Vandergrift, while the variety of the exhibition was more than they could have done just through her own institution, the question becomes whether events like this can easily translate digitally. “We have all of these small institutions that also have an awful lot of this institutional memory, collecting, holding on to important documents. So if we’re looking at digitalizing, how do we also capture that in this plan and where do we go with it?” (Vandergrift, 2013).

Pine, who is the collections manager of the Willamette Heritage Center, says there are other elements to consider when migrating analog content to digital, as well, such as whether or not there are legal restrictions. Privacy and copyright rules are ramping up, she says, and she tends to be risk averse about posting things or other potential scenarios without proper permission. She also brings up how digital platforms and social media affect interest level and relevance with small, local institutions like her own. “In some ways, they feel threatened by stuff going on in the Internet and all that. It’s exciting on one hand, but at the same time, it’s like, ‘Okay, if we can get all your information from Wikipedia, why would you go to a museum?’ That’s a genuine question that’s happening. I’ve got this yearbook here...if Ancestry.com scans it, will anyone look at the original here? I don’t know” (Pine, 2013).

An even more practical consideration the Willamette Heritage Center must

take into account for digitizing its collections is the matter development director Vandergrift is most familiar with – cost and funding. “We will have to find a way to be able to put things online, but it is an interesting process because we looked at...let’s just join Northwest Digital Archives because isn’t that wonderful? We don’t have \$20,000 a year to do that. So it’s going to have to happen if we want this kind of information to be accessible but we will have to find a way to fund doing that. And when we look at dollars and cents on putting things like that together, and I know that people are struggling with the Internet with this. It’s like: Okay, who pays for this? It’s all up there and it’s all free. When you have an institution like this and you have people doing the role of the curator, doing the role of the exhibit designer and the rest of that, somebody wants to be paid for their services” (Vandergrift, 2013).

But in terms of long-term preservation and access through digital means, Pine makes the case that it is not only cost prohibitive but also not likely to happen in the near future from a practicality standpoint. “We can’t save everything. It’s impractical to save everything. So if somebody brought me a box of photos, yeah, I may be able to put it online. There’s also financial aspect of that, too. It costs money to put things online. It costs money to scan it. It costs money to store it and to make it accessible. It’s a lot of effort and energy because keeping this stuff is —much as people don’t believe it— actually is extremely expensive. If we let everybody come in and access the information for free, we wouldn’t exist anymore because we wouldn’t be able to pay our bills. So we get that disconnect, too, between ‘yeah, we collect our community history’ but we also have to stay open and we have to make money so there’s a fee structure because we don’t receive city funds. We don’t receive state

funds. We rely on people to support us, and that, again, it's that nuance level of how do we keep everyone happy and provide access to everyone and tell everyone's stories? It's a scary place for museums to get to that point because part of how we stay alive is managing control over those things. And it's not easy." (Pine, 2013).

Adam F. Scott of the Art Institute of Chicago suggests that it is exactly the institutional choices that are made where some of the biggest changes are occurring, and he makes the strong case it is these types of choices that probably deserve the most attention. Who makes the decisions? Where are the power struggles? Who tells our stories? From his perspective, then, all of this discussion about how digital heritage platforms are changing the process is just the beginning of an ongoing dialogue about how they can be used not only to reposition the institution and reconsider cultural heritage, but also to challenge our own thinking as a society about how and why we choose to participate in the construction of memories in a digital landscape.

"Maybe what is in order is to question the classification system and the power structures as a form of institutional critique. Maybe these platforms should be used to challenge the institutional choices, not just to complain, but to open up a discussion about the history of those choices and how they've been made. The conflict between radical open source interpretation and curatorial expertise will always be happening but what might be more telling is to look at the absence and inclusion of material in the selection and privileging process, how those choices were made, to understand how we reflect, distill, and filtrate ourselves. If the curatorial is democratized, then now more than ever we need a visually and



historically educated public. Unfortunately, the ratio of access versus knowledge shows different trajectories. The ability of people to participate is on the rise but the ability of people to critically evaluate those things seems to be on the downswing. It will probably deflate notions of authoritative histories, which might be good in retrospect for what we can look back on but I'm not sure about what it means for the present moment. We have to recognize that there's not one way of remembering and what we might be seeing are a lot of minor histories, which adds complexity to the historical reading. Within this digital space there's all this kind of play and elasticity of meaning, where the official party line gets shifted pretty radically, which will probably change what we consider to be cultural heritage and what we choose to remember" (Scott, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION**

Much of the discourse that has been presented so far in this chapter has dealt with the ways in which digital platforms are altering notions of access, changing concepts of what consists of heritage, re-envisioning roles in heritage, and whether these digital heritage platforms are reconsidering a legacy of democratization or curatorial authority in digital heritage. According to respondents in this study, multimodal heritage platforms, social media applications, and digital media are indeed transforming the entire process of cultural heritage, forcing heritage professionals and participants to re-think what and how we choose to remember, and who will have the most influence interpreting our shared memories in a digital landscape.

Among the discussions presented in this chapter, one broad theme that is revealed relates to how digital heritage platforms have expanded notions of privileging access through new forms of participatory engagement, data management, search functions, and concerns over the longevity of technology formats. Participants also highlighted an expansion of criteria for what should be considered cultural heritage to now include more interactive, dynamic and searchable artifacts, entire data sets, and the networked traces of social media communication. Another issue that was expressed is that cultural heritage professionals and participants are also having to re-evaluate their own positions, responsibilities, and functions in the heritage process as part of the new reality brought on by the increasing use of and reliance on digital heritage platforms. Even more complicated are the emerging questions of which voices will have the most say in the cultural heritage process as the public take on more active and participatory roles in producing meaning and challenging traditional notions of curatorial authority. Lastly, other practical considerations emerge from discussions about how digital platforms allow for new processes and institutional thinking, such as an increasing trend toward gamification, transparency, and the economic viability of digital preservation.

The focus of the next chapter will concentrate more specifically on the discursive interpretations of the role that cultural heritage institutions play in the construction of collective memory and how multimodality is reshaping the participatory experience of interacting with digital heritage.

## CHAPTER V

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIMODAL MEMORY PRACTICES

*Archives have traditionally been viewed as the external and institutional basis for the remembering and forgetting of societies at different stages of development across history. Today, the archive is increasingly mediatized – part of the accessible and highly connected new memory ecology.*  
(Hoskins, 2010, p. 81)

The discussions from previous chapters have demonstrated how digital platforms and social media applications are considered to be changing conceptualizations of cultural heritage itself. However, the discourse surrounding the multimodality of digital platforms and social media applications -- in other words the use of different devices through different networks from different locations -- reveals contested terrain in the “pathways of remembering” (Hoskins, 2010, p. 78) across the new media landscape. As Hoskins puts it, “One can say then that digital media have complicated the temporal dimensions against which we measure our sense of presence in-the-world, and increasingly blurred this with our sense of presence in-the-media, and also presence-in-memory” (Hoskins, 2010, p. 75).

This chapter will further elaborate one of the most significant discursive interpretations of these temporal complications. The interpretation appears to deal with the blurring of boundaries between networked potentials for using these mediated technologies and suggested delivery of authentic experience. There seems to be a consensus among respondents to this study that the multimodality of these digital platforms equates with accruing value, significance, and promise in providing

new formats, spaces, and contexts for interacting with digital heritage content, the benefits of which are not lost on heritage professionals and participants. At the same time, this potential to participate with digital heritage content in dynamic, unparalleled ways is equally weighed against the lingering desire and steadfast commitment to promote an authentic experience with tangible or original collections of real objects. Thus, although respondents perceived the ability to reproduce cultural heritage digitally as an amazing and enabling turn of potentiality, they were still concerned about users connecting with the materiality of artifacts in an institutional setting. By examining this dichotomy between the possibilities of multimodal platforms and assumptions about authentic experience, this chapter will present some of the approaches, conditions, and implications of multimodality on memory practices.

Respondents revealed these factors through discussions about: (1) the presumed role of heritage institutions as both arbiters of memory and sites of debate/contestation; (2) the differences between the authenticity of experiencing digital surrogates and source objects in their institutional contexts; and (3) discursive themes regarding multimodality, including dimensions of choice, uninhibited participation, simultaneous presence, larger viewing spaces, broader scale of interest, and other composite aspects of selection and sharing. By clarifying the underlying interpretations and meanings of these aspects of multimodal platform use, I further substantiate how communities articulate shared memory in the new media landscape through interactive and participatory generating, contributing, selecting, appropriating, repurposing, and sharing digital cultural

heritage artifacts.

### **SHAPING THE MEMORY DEBATE THROUGH CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS**

According to the heritage practitioners and participants responding to this study, there is good reason to think of cultural heritage organizations, such as the Getty Research Institute, Prelinger Library and Archive, and the Willamette Heritage Center, as keepers of cultural memory or memory institutions. A primary purpose for each is to preserve, interpret, and exhibit tangible and intangible objects of cultural production from the past and present to be reviewed at a later date by future generations. In this way, these heritage institutions position themselves as spheres of debate about how and what we should remember.

For Murtha Baca, head of digital art history access at the Getty Research Institute, the definition of cultural heritage as memory institutions is straightforward. “We are a memory institution. I mean, that is our definition. The GRI and the museum are memory institutions. That is our primary goal. We are not limited to the visual arts. We are focused mostly on the visual arts but also architecture, material culture in the broadest sense. Actually, in special collections we have a lot of archival material on 20<sup>th</sup> century avant garde music, for example. So we are just a memory institution par excellence. That’s what we do” (Baca, 2013).

When considering the archives and collections of the Getty Research Institute, Anja Foerschner, assistant to GRI director Thomas Gaehtgens, thinks that the role of cultural heritage institutions in memory formation is more nuanced. She likens their role as both repositories of cultural heritage content and facilitators of

knowledge to playing a vital role in the construction of collective, cultural, and shared memory. “Institutions like the Getty Research Institute thus are important in the preservation of cultural material and making this material accessible to people. It can be processed, and enriched with people’s knowledge and point of views and approaches. The material can be disseminated and taken out and put into a different context. I think especially the variety with which the material is approached and worked on is important, as it can account for a very faceted, nuanced, multi-perspective nature of information from the cultural material that forms part of our collective memory. I also think a very important part of the Getty Research Institute is that we not only have a fixed staff of people working on those archives and those documents and those artifacts but that we also are trying very much to bring people from the outside, who always contribute fresh ideas and fresh approaches and different knowledge, and they will work on different aspects of objects or archives than the people before them” (Foerschner, 2013).

As further evidence of this, Foerschner refers to the rotating Residential Scholars program. In her view, this program is ripe for the formation of collective memory because its very design involves initiating a conversation surrounding fine arts objects as evidence of cultural production that leads to a more extensive dialogue about shared interests, knowledge, and content to a broader audience. “So to a certain point they can work here, they can use all of our library and all of our archives. Then, when they go back to their institute or when they publish or when they talk to people, they take something from the cultural heritage that is stored at the Getty out....put the information in a different context and, thus, also help to

disseminate it” (Foerschner, 2013).

Another example she points to is the Scholars Workspace initiative at the GRI. Foerschner associates this mediated form of collaboration and exchange to the performative act of selective memory. She reinforces this assertion by noting that there are so many versions of explanation surrounding projects, topics, and objects from the vast collections of the GRI that researchers participating in the Scholars Workspace are in many ways having to be more selective in what and how they choose to explain what is of value to remember. “On the other hand, the knowledge that we get from those collaborations is just way more differentiated, way more nuanced, and it is not just one big chunk of information from one single point of view. But it’s several. I think that is something that is very valuable, that you have more aspects, more points of view that, as I say, makes it harder for the recipient because he or she has to do more thinking, more work to a certain point. You can’t just take everything and say I’m going to use it all, you have to figure out what to include and what to weed out according to what you need and what you don’t need. The knowledge gets more shades when at other times it was black and white” (Foerschner, 2013). From this multiplicity of perspectives, then, comes a multivocal form of collective memory that is not only disseminated but also selectively debated.

It is also this selectivity that leads Anne Helmreich to consider the GRI as a producer of collective memory because of the context they can provide. At the same time, she believes they also offer a participatory element for where cultural memories can reside, be expressed, and debated. “Because institutions do choose objects and what becomes worthy of study and what becomes worthy of

preservation, that is a way of shaping memory. So I think that museums do, by choosing objects and choosing exhibition topics, they are shaping or sort of saying that this is what our culture should remember. But those become points of debate, as well, right? So when the Guggenheim did exhibitions on the motorcycle or fashion, some people said, 'No, these are too ephemeral, these are not the topics that museums should be devoted to.' They're also sites of debate. Just because a museum does it, doesn't mean, boom, it's instantly accepted. There are those spaces where people contest that memory. There's lots [sic] of great examples of that. They are in the public sphere. An exhibition is a space of debate. Museums are like educational institutions. It's a place of learning. So the choice of curating comes out of this deep and informed knowledge. The institution, just like the university, positions itself to say that this comes out of deep knowledge, building on the centuries of scholars before me" (Helmreich, 2013).

Although Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust believes cultural heritage institutions have a formative role in the construction of collective and cultural memory, she also understands that many other sources also play a factor in this process. "Well, I think it depends on who you ask, right? If you ask us, the cultural heritage institutions, we would think it plays a huge role. And we are fundamental in protecting that heritage and communicating it to the public and helping them understand who they are, but I think there's [sic] a lot of people out there who don't even know we exist. For example, this institution specifically, there's tons of people who don't know who we are and don't know we exist. And I think there's a huge population, a section of our population, that doesn't know that there are museums



and libraries, and don't get information from them at all. So I think it's spotty. I don't think we have a monopoly on that. I think there are a lot of people who do get their memory from CNN, from Stephen Colbert, from popular media, and their friends on Facebook now, right? You get what your friends give you" (Edwards, 2013).

So while Edwards positions cultural heritage institutions as having a large say in how things are remembered through their choices of what to preserve, interpret, and exhibit, she is equally open to the reality that they are not the sole determinant of cultural memory. This recognition also is fundamental to understanding that shared memories are often gleaned from a mosaic of sources, a factor that has significant implications for the digital realm. Though many people may turn to cultural heritage institutions as a trusted voice or source of information about their cultural pasts, the public is also relying on a network of other voices, perspectives, and sources to develop a more complete picture of our shared, memorable past.

For Rick Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library and Archive, cultural preservation and holding on to the past should not be a proprietary endeavor, with only a select few dictating the terms. In fact, he says, holding on to some notion that heritage institutions are the only venerable link between preservation and memory puts too much emphasis on cultural preservation and not enough on cultural performance. Furthermore, his argument is that perhaps there is a dialectic between remembering and letting go, or that letting go is in fact a discourse of privilege. However, what is most relevant to this study is what he calls "the memory of participation" (Prelinger, 2013). What Prelinger is saying is that while cultural

heritage institutions may hold a privileged role in preserving our pasts, particularly as repositories of cultural production, they are still only as relevant as the extent to which they let their audiences participate in cultural remembering. He explains:

“Well, it’s pretty contested, isn’t it? It seems like it’s a spectrum from irrelevancy and ignorance to active engagement and then contestation. I haven’t really dug into this, but I think in many ways using moving images and using historical evidence as part of cultural memory practice... people viewed them as powerful antidotes to amnesia. At the same time there’s also people that say, ‘Hey, look, these films are actually windows into some problematics of the past that we cannot take for granted. They don’t say the world is simpler at all. Look at what’s absent in the films. Look at the way they deal with difference. Look at the way they deal with contention.’ And I think that’s why the films were valued. People understand that history is a moving target, that we aren’t just talking about history of events and stages, but that we’re talking about history of changing perception over time as well” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

To demonstrate how audiences can involve themselves in such memory practices, Prelinger uses a selection of home movies as shared lived memories, puts those memories together, creates a digital production that allows for a live screening, without a soundtrack or narrative, but where everyone in the audience can provide meaning by discussing what they see on the screen. In doing so, Prelinger not only encourages his audiences to record their personal memories but also shows how they can be used as historical artifacts, highlights what they privilege, and fosters a discussion about how they attribute meaning through the

ways in which they remember the past.

Stefano Boni, head volunteer for the Prelinger Archive, agrees that what makes cultural heritage institutions so pertinent in the construction and maintenance of collective memory is not just the tangible and intangible materials they preserve, or even the perspectives they provide, but also the fascination their audiences develop from interacting with these materials. Boni realized this phenomenon when he started working as an archivist for the home movies in the Prelinger collection. Boni quickly began to see these home movies as a form of cultural evidence, as visual memories that revealed how people dressed, their hairstyles, what was in their homes, their particular rituals and activities.

“I think...as I’ve gone along and seen a lot of home movies and, you know, in my own work as an archivist, I feel like the importance and significance of home movies gets greater and greater as I work in them. I love seeing home movies of places — you know, people going on vacations and taking pictures of places — but also just everyday, day-to-day life of decades past is fascinating. Some things are similar. Some things are different. So I think home movies and amateur films are just...I think they’re in a lot of ways more important than Hollywood films because, almost like in a museum exhibit, rather than being shown exactly what they want you to see, you get to see something that’s done in a more intimate level. Even around here it’s kind of a joke that you see like one birthday party after the next or one film of Christmas after the next. And for a while, when I was looking through these, I think, ‘Oh, yeah, we’ve seen enough of those.’ But then, you know, everybody’s way of celebrating is different. Or as the decades go by, the fashions, the

styles, the customs, and everything changes...and some things stay the same. It's just fascinating to look at these things" (Boni, 2013).

So for Boni, the fascination that comes from participating is paramount when considering the role of cultural heritage institutions and their collections in the formation of shared, cultural, and collective memory. Though Boni initially became interested in film preservation because of his love for old Hollywood films, it has been his work with the Prelinger home movie collection that has given him a glimpse into a past that is more intimate, ordinary, and lifelike, as if he himself is participating in a collective recollection.

"It feels like this is what actual history is versus what I've been shown. There was a home movie of just somebody's kitchen. They shot the kitchen in great detail. It was really funny. It got a great reaction out of the audience, but it was really interesting because for one thing, the way that it looked, you know, being so different from what a modern kitchen would look like. But also that somebody cared enough at that point in time to detail and document their kitchen in such great detail. I think it lets us see how things actually are or were. So things that may have been forgotten, kind of details like somebody's kitchen that probably no one would care to remember 50 years later. But I think it's fascinating, you know, based on the reaction it got. It's fascinating to a lot of people. So like little details like that, and somebody's backyard party, barbecue, whatever, just stuff that...the everyday stuff that gets lost through time and people forget about. And they remember the big events, you know, like they might remember a trip that they took someplace to Europe or whatever. But just everyday stuff is, I think, is what ends up being really

fascinating or at least as fascinating, you know?” (Boni, 2013).

Archivist Kylie Pine of the Willamette Heritage Center thinks cultural heritage is less about what audiences get out of their collections and more about what they put into it. By this, Pine is not referring to objects they can contribute to a collection, exactly, but rather she is proposing that cultural heritage can only culturally construct a memory of what happened if it can reference what a community can or wants to recall. “Some of the things that I’m trying to do here in the archives is [sic] collecting our collective memory, in tangible forms, trying to do more of our oral history. So we’re getting more individualized snippets that hopefully overall when we create our archive, in the general sense, we’ll give a much broader idea of the different levels...not levels but areas of life expertise, interests, thoughts, perspectives from personalized perspective. There are challenges to that” (Pine, 2013).

According to Willamette Heritage Center development director Amy Vandergrift, what they do at the center reflects a more personalized account, a microcosm within the larger community story, and even how that story relates to a broader national significance. Clear examples of this, she explains, come through the personal documents, objects, and stories in their collection from the local community related to the land claim system of the area, local senators who were instrumental in national legislation, or the role the area played in major governmental projects between the 1930s-1950s, including dams, roads, and the saving of forests. In other respects, the center simply re-tells the stories of prominent and less renowned individuals from the region to shape a memory of its

community's own identity and past. However, Vandergrift asserts that one of the primary challenges for getting the community members to participate and contribute their own stories in cultural heritage is often making them aware of the Willamette Heritage Center. In her mind, even though these repositories hold the positional advantage with their collection of materials, it matters little if their knowledge, cultural production, and cultural memories are not shared.

“I think certainly the physical fact that the building is here helps people understand some of their heritage, but there are a lot of people in town who don't know it's here, and they have no idea what it is nor [are they] interested in exploring what it is either. That really relates to the community, and that's probably our purpose. We document how this community came to be. We document how it was part of the greater story....We talk about the pioneers as being a very important part of our heritage as we marched through to manifest destiny, and this was the end of that trail. And so here we are talking about that and what that brought to this community. So we talk about industrialization. We talk about agriculture. We talk about how we fit into that greater story. So that's probably the story that we are saving here, the memory that we're saving here, and how that interplays together” (Vandergrift, 2013).

In large part, the reason these cultural heritage institutions were chosen as objects of study is because they consider themselves to be sites of debate, contestation, and dissemination of cultural history, production, and memory. As is evidenced by their own discursive interpretations, heritage practitioners and participants self-identify with the stated purpose of being the negotiators of what

and how communities remember. By recognizing that these institutions play a significant role in the formation of cultural, social, and collective memory, we are able to see how different the experience of remembering might be. Particularly when individuals are interacting with a heritage institution's collections through digital platforms and social media applications because it is no longer about making memories with particular content but also what people are doing with it in this multimodal context.

### **NEGOTIATING BETWEEN AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE AND DIGITAL SURROGATES**

While cultural heritage institutions have positioned themselves as intermediaries between individual and collective memories through their curatorial efforts, often serving as conduits between the conservation of content and the continuity of culture, they must also now increasingly navigate between the perceptions of authentic experience and the expectations of digital surrogates.

In some cases, heritage practitioners and participants wonder how institutions will be able to maintain a sense of authentic experience when digital platforms and content transform the context of experience and interaction so significantly. Another concern is that the proliferation of digital content and multimodal platforms has many cultural heritage institutions struggling with what many consider to be a richer experience in the presence of primary material and real objects in an institutional setting versus the impression that experiencing digital traces is somehow inferior, if not less authentic. In either case, cultural heritage institutions must confront the conceptual differences between authentic

experience and digital surrogates because it remains a defining issue on the minds of heritage practitioners and participants.

While many respondents to this study expressed their enthusiasm for the possibilities of the digital, a consistent thread of discussion undermined notions of authenticity when accounting for digital artifacts. The reservation that experiencing the digital is somehow insufficient when compared to the veracity of the authentic museum experience is a challenge with which heritage institutions must increasingly contend. This section will highlight and address these concerns before we move on to what many respondents see as the potential and broader appeal for multimodal platforms and interaction in cultural heritage.

Anne Helmreich of the Getty Foundation makes clear that one of the primary goals for cultural heritage institutions, even as they wade further into the vast depths of the digital landscape, is to project an air of authority and authenticity. “Museums also work really hard to create this notion of the authentic object. While they may host works of art about digital manipulation, when they present works of art, they want to present them in a way that minimizes the potential for manipulation through the digital because the notion of authentic is critical to the museum experience. While there’s [sic] plenty of contemporary artists that riff on that but then the understanding is that the role of the object within the museum is authentic” (Helmreich, 2103).

At the same time, while Helmreich argues that the primacy of collection objects should remain the goal of cultural heritage institutions, she finds there is still a place for the digital in the process. Rather than seeing the two as oppositional, she



wonders if they can also play complementary roles. “That’s a big question that has many parts to it. I mean, yes, if you are looking at an object on a tablet then it is very different than encountering it in the museum. Those are just different experiences. There will be some people who will say that the digital surrogate is a bad substitute for the physical object. And in many ways they’re right. You’re not getting every dimension of the object. On the other hand, I think it’s a very valuable way to encourage people to want to come see the actual object. The thing that gets photographed and re-tweeted and things like that becomes an object of fascination and draws people to it. It becomes a magnet. I think the physical and the digital are just different” (Helmreich, 2013).

Liz McDermott, managing editor of Web and communications at the GRI, indicates there is undoubtedly a difference between the two experiences and that the comparison of authenticity between source material and digital introduces layers of complexity to the formation of memory. She associates much of the confusion to the intentions of curators, who often express to her their worries that something of the original is lost, particularly its context, when content gets digitized and shared across networked platforms. She knows from her line of work that analogical connections can always be made between source material in a collection and its digital counterparts, but she sees lingering concern from curators that letting digital content go beyond the walls of their institution, literally, could lead to disorientation in the meaning-making process and shaping of cultural memory.

“There’s some tension there. Many people can come here physically and see an object, and they have their whole experience with it that changes their lives and

how that affects them....The museum is a place for people to come. The curators have a narrative that they tell about the objects together....The difference between sitting quietly in a gallery space, contemplating on a work of art and separate from your daily life and there's just peace and quiet around you versus you scrolling on your iPhone, looking at objects with your kids calling, your phone line ringing. How could it not affect it, you know what I mean?"(McDermott, 2013). While McDermott herself does not see the institutional and digital experience as being wholly incompatible, she definitely shares the curators' concerns that there is a contextual difference, which could have implications on the formation of social memory.

Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department offers a more direct assessment about how curators feel about the importance of experiencing the original source material in an institutional setting, while also pointing out that perhaps one of the capabilities of the digital experience is to provide more context, not less. As an example, she refers to how in a museum a visitor might get to see an original artifact, such as a piece of art, but there might only be a placard on the side of the wall that describes what a curator wants you to know about that piece. On the other hand, the digital delivery of that item might allow for videos about it how it was transported, a conversation with the curator or someone else through social media, a visual comparison to other derivative pieces, or other contextual information. What Edwards suggests, then, is that while curators may fret about their curatorial authority over an authentic object, perhaps the authenticity instead comes from whatever connection is produced between the viewer and the content, whether in real life or digitally.

“Yeah, you know, one of my favorite examples of that is the idea of when I was a kid and I would look at my parents art books all the time and I looked all the time, and I was so familiar with those works of art and then when I was older and I went into a museum and I saw one of those paintings that I remembered as a child I felt like this is my friend. I mean, people talk about this all the time. They see the real object that they’ve known from reproduction, and they feel like they found an old friend. They know this object, and it feels very personal. And, yeah, I think that right there, it’s proof that that can happen, that representing stuff digitally or in any form really can do that for people. This can now be with the object, as well. You can come into the museum and get all of that on your phone or your tablet while you’re in front of the actual object. That’s exciting to a lot of curators actually; although, they want to put a whole book, like a tome, to make people stand there like that. I agree it’s different. But still, the original is why the other stuff exists. So it’s still very important. And I think this is part of the reason why curators [are] being a little bit more resistant to technology, and some of the participatory stuff online, because they feel like that actual object really is better and really is the core thing that people need to see. Whether they’re right or not, I don’t know” (Edwards, 2013).

Another insight Edwards highlights about the debate between the authentic original versus the digital surrogate is that it should not be forgotten that even the context a museum can provide is essentially an institutional construction. That is why she questions the notion that one should be thought of as being inherently more authentic in either context. She argues that when people attribute a certain gravitas to heritage institutions, which is not necessarily unwarranted given their

expertise and missions, they should also be mindful of the fact that context is a construct that always influences the way something will be remembered.

“Well, that’s supposed to be — especially with history museums — that’s their mission. It’s our cultural heritage. You’ll hear a lot of history museum types say, ‘This is your cultural heritage. This is ours. It belongs to us.’ When you get to an art museum, it becomes a little different, right? Because this is cultural heritage that literally belonged, usually belonged to an individual who bought it, and it was theirs. It belonged to them, and they didn’t let anyone else see it. So there’s less of that feeling of ambivalence in wanting the public to own it than history museums, I think” (Edwards, 2013). Given the fact that there are obvious differences in types of museums, which most likely changes the context of how heritage is conveyed, how is authenticity even determined, let alone attributed more or less to original versus digital content?

Willamette Heritage Center volunteer Sandy Bond reiterates that the contextual arrangement of where something is seen is an important factor for how viewers absorb the broadest interpretation and have their attentions directed. She describes how going to a museum provides a particular contextual arrangement in how curators tell you what you are supposed to look at, in what particular order, with little placards to read that both guide and inform your experience. She indicates this is a significantly different experience than if you are directing your own attention where you want, at your own pace, based on your own interests, when you are seeking things out online or across digital platforms.

“I don’t know. In a museum you can get a broader sense of the history of the

area whereas looking at that one artifact online you don't get that broader, overall sense. I guess if you're going to a museum and you're doing the guided tour, you have a different attitude and different purpose. You're there to learn about the overall topic. If you're researching online, you're typically looking for one specific thing. If you find one thing, it might lead you to research more than just that one topic, to go to other resources, or even go to the museum to learn more. I'll try to find something specific online, but with the nature of the Internet I'm clicking on all of these links and the next thing you know I'm discovering all these things I didn't even know I was looking for. That's very different than when I'm viewing an exhibit that is tangible and physically contained. Whatever is there is all you get. It focuses you more. It's unlikely you'll get sidetracked and lost" (Bond, 2013). As such, Bond does not consider the difference between the original source and digital as being a matter of authenticity of experience but the difference between how one's attentions can be directed.

Prelinger Archive volunteer Stefano Boni refers to the difference between material sources and digital sources not so much as a matter of which is more authentic but more as an issue of orientation for participant attention. As a self-described cinephile and film preservationist, Boni prefers handling the actual reels of film from the Prelinger collection of home movies but he also thinks that digital versions can redirect the attention of viewers back to the original. Put another way, Boni does not advocate comparing material and digital sources for authenticity sake but sees them more as being referential to each other. To him, the material and the digital are inherently different but the original can just as often inform the viewer

about the derivative work and vice versa. His point also speaks to the issue of access that was discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

“Yeah, I mean the digital file is definitely different than if we were to thread this up on a projector and project it on a screen. It’s going to look different in that respect aesthetically versus the Monet on your computer versus being in front of it and seeing the brush strokes and everything. Seeing the film grainy on the screen in the light versus seeing it on a digital file on your computer, it’s going to be different. But you kind of accept that. It’s not always possible to watch the film version, just as it’s not always possible to see the Monet in person. But I think being able to have it more accessible is great. My feeling has always been as long as you can see the original version or know what the original...I mean, it’s like with music when somebody does a new version of it. I want to know what the original version is, where they sampled something. I’m curious to know what the original version was like. Oftentimes, I prefer the original version. Sometimes I like the new version or what they’ve created based on the original version. I think it’s just important, especially from an archival point, that you have the original version to see what that was like. I think it’s fine that people make their own creations. I think sometimes the original version would never even be noticed or wouldn’t reach a wider audience until somebody came up with that new version” (Boni, 2013).

For Murtha Baca, head of digital art history access at the Getty Research Institute, the issue of context and authenticity are not about where the objects are shown but in determining what should even be considered original. Though Baca sees an opening for more participatory activity and many other positives through

digital platforms, she also raises the issue that certain referential value can be diminished through digitization. She points out that in some cases certain materials cannot effectively be translated into digital formats whereas in other cases the digital simply removes or lessens certain qualities of the original artifact.

For example, Baca refers to a collection of video art from the 1960s-1970s that was acquired by the Getty Research Institute from the Long Beach Museum of Art. She says there were many issues of preservation and cataloging, in addition to difficulties of getting the applicable technology to play the material and convert it to digital. Baca points out that in addition to the converted copies, there could also be mash-ups or derivative works out there, as well. This leaves her asking the questions of what the implications are for considering originality when referential value becomes so convoluted and, when an artifact is converted to a digital format, what of the original is lost?

“So, yeah, what’s the original? If one of your students takes the Mona Lisa and alters it digitally and makes some new work out of it, would they forget what the original Mona Lisa is that hangs on the Louvre? And a big issue with digital is the idea of: we forget what the physical object is like because you forget the scale. Because it’s like on the computer, how do you know how big it is? A lot of people don’t know that the Mona Lisa is really small or some other works are really huge. And how do you render that scale? To students, it’s like, ‘Well, it’s all digital, and it’s on the screen.’ How do they know how big it is and what was the meaning of how big it was? So a lot of those kinds of things can get lost” (Baca, 2013).

Another facet over this debate of authenticity that Baca poses deals with the

kinds of contextual knowledge that can come from interpreting primary source material. In other words, she asserts, there is no guarantee of authenticity either from an interpretation or the object itself. A case in point could be if a scholar says he/she is studying a painting by the artist Domenicino. That doesn't mean it really is a painting by Domenicino. The scholar may simply think it was by Domenicino. Perhaps it came from a collection thought to include a piece by Domenicino. Perhaps the piece was done by a pupil of Domenicino. Another possibility could be that it was a copy of an original but still done by Domenicino.

In such a case, then, even the original may not necessarily produce certainty of authenticity, which only becomes murkier with each interpretation that is sustained within the discourse of cultural heritage or perhaps codified in a printed textbook. "Mostly when students study art history now they study some textbook, so it's already pre-digested. The guy who wrote the textbook has decided what he thinks is the answer and what does this mean and you just read it and then you take a test and answer the question. This idea that everything is [accurate]...you could write an article and get half your facts wrong. You know it happens all the time in journalism and even in history. But going back to a primary document of the time, unmediated. People can read my translation or they can read the essays we've written about this material, or they can go to the primary document and see what people were saying in 1681 about all these painters and what they collected and what was important. Again, we have to teach our students that just because he said it...So you also have to know how to take these primary source documents with a grain of salt. Just because they said they owned a Rafael or Domenicino doesn't



mean they did” (Baca, 2013).

What Baca is proposing, then, is that questions of authenticity will always remain whether it is a primary source, an interpretation, or a digital copy.

Approaching the topic from this point of view renders the comparison between the actual and the digital over which offers the most authentic experience a moot point.

Put most simply, authenticity should be called into question at every stage of cultural heritage, so to credit something as being more “real” is a tenuous proposition from the start.

Megan Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library, does not like to ascribe such meaning as better or worse when comparing a primary experience to looking at a digital version. To her, the matter is simply a “totally different dimension of choices” (Prelinger, M., 2013). While Prelinger recognizes that there are profound differences in experiencing something firsthand versus digitally, she also asserts that both experiences should be thought of as being neither equivalents nor as incongruous but rather as simply having different potentials.

“Sure, because if you’re having a primary experience over here, you’re the one selecting and transforming the thing for the network. And if you’re just on your tablet in a coffee shop or whatnot, you’re a node in the network. So it’s a different role within the network. You see what I mean? The person browsing the shelves might look at 300 things before they pick what they’re going to tweet. The people in a coffee shop haven’t chosen the one thing out of the 300 things. I mean, they have, but they’re choosing the one thing out of a totally different dimension of choices. You know, the transformative potential network access cannot be overstated. It

cannot be. We couldn't reach 50,000 people with one image through physical visits. However, the person doing, performing the physical visit has a tactile experience that's irreproducible, and that's why people keep coming here. That's why we get more popular every year here. Every year we're more popular than the year before. And it's because of that irreproducibility of the physical browsing experience. But you know, I don't see print and digital as being in opposition. I see them as complementary. One book...three people may have a profound experience with it, but if we digitize it, it could be read by 3,000 people 24/7, whereas our library is only open one day a week. So they're just reaching different audiences and different contexts in totally different dimensions" (Prelinger, M., 2013).

Rick Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library and Archive, addresses the issue of authenticity by saying participants in cultural heritage deserve more credit for being able to multi-task, be more multi-present, and differentiate between the actual and the digital. To Prelinger, we are not trapped unawares in this world of representation and simulation as much as Plato's allegory of the cave or Baudrillard's (1983) notions of simulacrum might have us believe. His argument is that most viewers understand the difference between the material and the digital, so whatever notion of authentic experience we ascribe to either is really a matter of personal preference and choice rather than an a priori determination.

Prelinger also asserts that people have always had some measure of experience with developing their own iterations of simultaneous presence. To illustrate this, he points to the aboriginal people of Australia who, he says, exist in what they call "dream time," where there is no past, no present, no future, just

everything happening at once. In such a state, these people are living in the moment but they're also living in many moments. Similarly, some deeply religious people claim to be living in a spiritual and temporal world at the same time. Arguably, there are other cultures that express being able to traverse between an incorporeal realm and the three-dimensional present. Furthermore, Prelinger asserts that developing societies have long been learning how to negotiate between their personal lives and mass media broadcasting, home-based media consumption, narrowcasting, and increasingly mobile technologies.

“I think people are pretty good at navigating differences between the multimodal. I think it's similar in the sense that we can be chatting with friends and then we can be watching a movie or sitting on a bus or walking down the street. Humans are actually pretty good at naturalizing that. Yeah, and I think that people are also pretty savvy about understanding what's real and what's a picture of real. People who are going to go to Occupy went to Occupy regardless of the fact that anybody could watch it. I think the externalities are a lot more powerful than the media representation still. And this has always been my great paradox as a film person, as a person interested in media values, media history. It's still really hard for me to see media and modes of media having strong determinate force. The older I get, I see the world just flooding in on top of over-determining representations big time. I could be wrong. But then when you invite people to constantly enact their relationship to what they're watching in real time, I think pretty interesting things happen” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

While each of these perspectives initiates a variety of viewpoints about how

to measure or think about authenticity when considering the differences between interacting with material objects or source material against digital surrogates or simulations, there is still a persistent thread of discussion that comes down to a preference for experiencing “the real thing.” This is certainly the case for photographer Suzanne Levine, one of the participants at the screening of *Lost Landscapes* of San Francisco in December 2013.

“Absolutely, absolutely. Are you kidding me? The experience is significantly different and way more meaningful experiencing it in person. I remember being in museums and seeing the brushstrokes and looking at the painting from different angles. Looking at how other people respond to an image and their reaction to it. Going to a museum with another person is one of my favorite things to do and looking at art and discussing it. It is just so interesting to me to see how everybody sees things differently. It’s way more enjoyable being with the real thing. Even a book on a tablet is kind of similar...the tablet is quicker and you can reference it faster, the Internet is fantastic that way too, I can go anywhere and ask any question and get answers way faster, but they’re just not memorable in the same way as walking into a museum or standing in front of an image. That’s way more powerful to me. The intensity for me of being right in front of van Gogh’s ‘Starry Night’ instead of seeing it in a book or on a tablet....The two just can’t be compared. It’s an experience, and it’s interesting, but it’s not the real thing. And seeing the real thing also means seeing it in a certain context. How many times have I seen pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge? I live here in San Francisco, but every time I’m in Marin County and I cross that bridge into the city, it takes my breath away as I come through the

tunnel and I see the framing of the towers. One of these days I'm going to take a video of it or photograph it and film that process. But it will still never be the same experience of actually doing it" (Levine, 2014).

However, even as she speaks of the veracity of actual experience, Levine interject that she is neither arguing for nor is she convinced that one is necessarily more accurate. She makes this important distinction by repeating her strong preference for interacting with original material as being a more authentic experience for her, yet she cautions against assuming one is more real or accurate at the same time. In other words, seeing a masterpiece work of art in person may fill her with a sense of awe and wonderment, but a digital copy may be just as accurate in terms of detail and referential value. So part of what she is arguing is that we must even further distill how we consider what "authentic" means.

Lastly, when considering the differences of experiencing cultural heritage in person versus digital simulation, Prelinger Library volunteer Heather Jovanelli worries that digital materials could come to replace the experience of actual events because we get more focused on the media and all of its limitations that are left behind. Jovanelli refers to a recent example of a recorded music performance, where she sang and played guitar in Oakland, an event that a friend had captured on his iPhone and then posted on Facebook. "I think there's some risk involved. I don't really want to watch it because it's so different from the actual experience. The sound on it would not be as good as the sound was in person because the phone doesn't have the capabilities to capture it accurately, or the lighting wasn't how we would see it with our eyes. So if she were to post that on Facebook or Instagram, I'd

be like, crap, that may be what comes to other people's minds who saw that video but weren't there. They wouldn't have memories from the actual experience or they'll remember her video more readily as an icon of the experience. I don't know if some people think that much about it. I think the mediums are definitely limited in their ability to capture reality and that's the risk. It's scary in some regards. I'm worried that people will actually forget what the actual experience was as an impulse because they saw the media – a picture or a short clip of it. They lose that central experience" (Jovanelli, 2014).

Thinking of it this way, Jovanelli argues that the multimodal element, rather than going to an actual place and experiencing in the context of an archive, a library, a museum, entirely changes the experience when looked at on a smart phone or tablet reader in a café or on the bus. Though she does not think it's entirely a bad thing, she does believe that removing the contextual basis of the original leaves the viewer with only a sense of the media, not the masterpiece. "There's a risk that you might change the intent of the art form you're looking at. I was looking at this one painting, it was a van Gogh, and it was almost like time stopped. The way that he was able to use the paint to create the form of the bushes and the river, it was cinematic and I was standing right in front of it. And he's probably one of the biggest examples of how if you recreate or look at his painting on a tablet, you're not going to get that historic moment with it that you would have in real life. I think that's a sad thing. But it might also be a good thing. It might inspire someone to want to see it in real life. I would just hope that people would realize that looking at fine art that way is not as historic when looking at it on a phone" (Jovanelli, 2014).

In reviewing these various perspectives, it should be clear that cultural heritage practitioners and participants are still giving much thought to the differences of experience between interacting with original content versus digital simulations. It is doubtful this line of thinking will diminish or be resolved any time soon. After all, questions of reality versus representation have been debated since the time of Plato and will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Though the goal of heritage institutions might be to promote an air of authenticity, as they increasingly embrace and utilize multimodal platforms, they will also have to contend with the multiplicity of perceptions about what people consider to be authentic experience.

Some may regard the original and the digital to be complementary rather than oppositional. Some may feel that the digital will lead to disorientation in terms of participant attention. Perhaps to some the digital offers more context rather than less. Some might argue that context itself should be considered a faulty construction, authenticity should not be considered the same thing as accuracy, or maybe there can simply be no guarantee of either originality or authenticity. However, the recognition by some that different dimensions of choice offer different potentials, that people have become accustomed to simultaneous presence, and that there is a risk that the mediated versions will come to replace the actual experience means that there are many ways to consider the implications of experiencing the actual versus the digital. Having brought these discursive interpretations to light, we shall let this ongoing debate continue elsewhere, as we now redirect our attentions to what cultural heritage practitioners and participants see as the implications of

multimodality on memory.

### **THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN MULTIMODAL PLATFORMS AND MEMORY PRACTICE**

Respondents to this study indicate that there are many compelling issues to consider when it comes to the capacities of multimodal heritage platforms. In so many ways, these networked platforms are reshaping performative sociality, distributive knowledge, and memory sharing capabilities, which deserve more thorough investigation to better understand how heritage practitioners and participants frame their expectations, experiences, and interests with using these platforms for shared recollections. Where mediated communal memories were once attributed to and constructed by the unified broadcasts of the mass media, our current use of multimodal platforms and social media applications has fragmented audiences through their increasing attention to multiple screens, on multiple networks, from multiple locations. As such, these enabling technologies are not generating collective memories that encompass society as a whole, as they were once thought to be, as much as they are now forming platformed communities of memory that are participating in and interacting with digital content through the functions of these platforms and applications. This requires further investigation and a new understanding about how these multimodal platforms can thus be used in cultural heritage to enable the formation of shared memory in the digital landscape.

Foerschner of the Getty Research Institute insists that these multimodal platforms are indeed reshaping the playing field because of their performative



qualities, which now allow people to share their interests, share their experiences, and share content rather than having content simply broadcast at them. She warns, however, that the difficulty of using these platforms is that since we are now creating such a digital record -- a vast wealth of data from what we record on our cell phones, what we upload, what we share, what we comment on -- how are we supposed to make sense of so many versions of everything that is now part of the conversation? So, although Foerschner finds that the potential for uninhibited participation is a good thing in some respects, it also can lead to information overload or difficulties in focusing our attention on what it is we want to collectively remember.

“We are collecting and trying to bring the knowledge that we acquire out, that’s what we more and more use the social media for in digital art history. What I think that may be part of the danger, if that is the right word, but also a huge change, is that all of this media, where this exchange can take place, this communication, putting something out there, and people can just chime in, like the Scholars’ Workspace, can collaboratively work on a project or a topic or object, that more points of view from more and various backgrounds and knowledge and experiences, and also expectations get kind of mixed together. Which makes it, of course, a little difficult at first to discern what is of value to me, what isn’t, and sometimes people put something out there that does not have that much value, so I have to think more and learn to discern between what is useful and what isn’t” (Foerschner, 2013).

Helmreich of the Getty Foundation sees the diversity of material that can be submitted and shared via multimodal platforms as being less of a distraction and

more of a means to expand the conversation. From her perspective, having the ability to circulate digital content and experiences through different devices from different locations creates a new toolbox for what and how we choose to remember. “I think you could probably create a kind of greatest hits if you wanted to if you really wanted to just spend time dominating the social media and drive something up and tweet it out, then you could probably create a certain buzz around something. You know, Andy Warhol’s fifteen minutes of fame. Our world is not immune to that. So, yeah, they are probably going to make the conversation bigger and different ways of participating than before. I just don’t see it as a night and day change but a broadening of the circle” (Helmreich, 2013).

McDermott of the GRI makes the case that multimodality is not at all about the digital material that is being generated and shared. She contends that what is most revealing about the possibilities of multimodal platforms are the connections and filtering processes that can be traced and documented. By following the trail of digital fingerprints – the evidence of conversations, searches, Web hits, and links – heritage practitioners and participants are leaving inscriptions of their own interests, inclinations, and behaviors as digital breadcrumbs. They show where people have been and what they’ve done digitally, allowing for a refurbished type of recall that can be used to renegotiate the terms for what is considered as constitutive of cultural heritage and memory practice, including new ways to capture and present institutional memory.

“Well, I guess I sort of think about a version of this all the time where we have, especially here at the GRI, these vast resources that are so deep that we

couldn't begin to show everything. So I'm always struggling with: What do we to pick to show? And then how do we show it? What we're able to show online either on the website or through social media, then, yeah, what remains is the memory of this institution" (McDermott, 2013).

Being in charge of the GRI's Web presence, McDermott also recognizes that, although she can produce content with a particular intention in mind on a particular platform, the multimodal element of networked technologies also requires her to relinquish any semblance of control over how that content will be used. In some ways, she feels like she is simply activating ongoing potential and enjoys following the trail of its unpredictable pathways. "I feel like my job is to just put it out there and not to predetermine how they might interact with it. Because then I'm prejudicing material, prejudicing how somebody might use it. My job is to just put it out there as accurately as I can, as clearly as I can, being sensitive to the platform that it's on. I don't think it's my job to then try to go, 'Hmm...I think it can go...they might do this with it.' I think our role here is to share the information...but it's more just to share and let people use it as they will and make their connections with each other. I just think all of our content is wonderful, and whatever people do with it I have no control. I just find it fascinating sort of, culturally or psychologically, what do people end up doing with it? And there's certainly been things [sic] that I presented that were more dry to me and then was surprised that people really liked it. It's giving everybody a chance to interact with it in whatever way they want. I do think, when people have a chance to have an opinion about something or comment on it or share something, it makes people feel more connected to something"

(McDermott, 2013).

To trace where things go, she points to a form of real-time social media search analysis called “social listening.” One site she points to, Social Mention, is still in its early stages and is not capable of capturing everything being talked about online. It does allow for rudimentary searching of names, who’s talking about them, where it’s showing up, and so forth. McDermott is hopeful that these sites will develop further and even end up as a whole new field of study, allowing heritage practitioners and participants to follow conversations around how people are talking about or sharing digital content. In essence, much like archives of written letters, correspondence, and articles from previous generations, now there is potential for more documented discussion and activity for us to revisit later. These digital remains of multimodal platforms thus have the potential to be rediscovered and remembered much like mementos or souvenirs can stir memories.

“It’s a big experiment right now. I don’t know other than....I mean, I have no idea because it’s still to be determined. And even if it is going to affect the collective memory and what that might look like [it] is still really in early stages. I think scholars could come in here and interact with objects, and they have their memory of that. Then....it’s a community memory, people sharing all this info. I don’t know how that memory would differ. But that’s fascinating, too. We can’t begin to keep up with all this stuff, right?” (McDermott, 2013).

Despite her assertions that multimodal platforms allow for unexpected results that can also become a broader record of reminiscence, McDermott remains aware of constraints from her own filtering processes, those dictated by the

platforms themselves, and even from how those platforms are used. “There is editorializing that goes on. It's necessary. Like if you're putting something in a print newspaper, you have to say it in 800 words of space. Saying what you need to say in 800 words is different than writing a book that's 750 pages. I want to write about it, talk about it differently. Well, I think the application controls it to an extent. I mean, again, looking back at traditional forms...whether something is a feature film or book or news article, those platforms are dictating the way that story will be told. But you might be telling the same story, and each one might have the same thematic thrust or point it wants to make, but it's going to be done in a different way that's going to be appropriate for that platform. I do the same thing with these digital platforms as well. I always think of it as more storytelling in the most honest way you can. So the platform, in that sense, does dictate how you say things. It's like on the Web we come to these conversations all day. The way people read on the Web is nothing like they read normally. You don't read from left to right, top to bottom. I've seen those eye-tracking charts. So we have to think about that: how can we be aware of that but honor the depth and breadth of the material in a way? That's like an interesting challenge. How can we say something in three words that captures the essence of something to where someone will click to really learn more about it?” (McDermott, 2013).

The promise of multimodality for Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department is the personal connection that can be made between heritage institutes and their communities, connection she thinks has a direct relationship to the formation of social memory. “Well, I think there is potential for it

to affect much more than it has in the past because of things like social media, because we can get to people much more directly than we could in the past. I work in the communications department. The Web group's a part of communications, and there's a definite divide between our groups because a lot of people in communications, their mode of operation is to send out press releases. So for them, the press, the traditional journalists, journalism industry is what their focus is. And that's where meaning is made for them. And in their training and their history and their practice that's how you get to create memory. That's how you get to the people....you put it in the newspaper, I guess. Whereas the rest of us who work in Web, who are much more used to this – anybody can go online, anybody can talk about anything, anybody can post a blog – we are more entrenched in social media, we tend to look at that and go, 'These people are crazy. We need to be online. We need to be engaging with our audience directly, not going through this layer of the journalists.' It makes me think that we're in a transitional period. The old guard is starting to understand that. I think the cultural institution is moving very slowly on this as a sector, so I mean, I think we should be on that space. I think we should be trying to affect the memory of our culture" (Edwards, 2013).

In addition to changing the gatekeeping process, Edwards also proposes that the participation, interaction, and engagement allowed by the multimodality of these digital applications holds potential for more memorable experiences and impacts how we remember. "Well, I go back on the whole educational thing, where when you learn something by being told, it's different than learning something from doing it yourself. The educational theory and studies have shown this that the more

you do hands-on learning, you're actually participating, you're learning in an active way, the more you'll remember it, and it's going to become part of who you are. I'm just postulating here. But if you read an article about Jackson Pollock and who he was and look at his paintings, that's very different from: read about Jackson Pollock, use an online drawing tool to make your own Jackson Pollock, then post it on Facebook, and see what your friends think about it and talk to them about what you did and how you did it. You're going to remember what Jackson Pollock was about, I think, a lot better than if you had simply read that article and walked away. I don't think we are as meta-aware of what we are even doing ourselves. For people who do participate in all of that stuff that we produced, certainly that must be affecting their cultural memory in some way" (Edwards, 2013).

Edwards also has given much thought to this idea of cultural memory. Her doctoral dissertation involved the examination of images as a way to explore a communal, common memory of who we are as a society. In her research, she looked at iconic images from pocket magazines during World War II that showed the positive versions of how America wanted to be seen as a people – tolerant, multicultural, that we allowed freedom of religion – while perhaps ignoring some of the other elements happening in society, such as the Japanese internment or racial segregation, that were not being shown as part of the war narrative. "I found actual images that were used for complete opposite...images that were used to show whites and blacks living in harmony together, the same exact image to show division in another magazine in another story. This is something that drives art historians crazy, actually. It's historians using visual imagery to bolster their historical

arguments but not understanding the context of the visual image” (Edwards, 2013).

Edwards’ notion of these degrees of visual truths being used to construct or support institutional narratives for how we should remember events, periods, or even ourselves as a society mirrors my own research interests and has no shortage of examples. She agrees that much of the cultural significance we place on a historical event, for how we remember it, is often based on a single mediated memory cue - an image or film clip. However, she points out that how we remember something based on that piece of evidence can be skewed by perspective or manipulated. Several examples quickly come to mind. Recall the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the iconic Pulitzer Prize-winning John Filo photograph of Mary Vecchio kneeling over the body of Jeffrey Miller at Kent State in 1970. The image was reprinted in a 25th anniversary retrospective of the event that appeared in a *Life Magazine* article, “Caught in time” (*May 1, 1995, p. 38*). However, the image, which had been pulled from the Time-Life photo library collection and used in numerous other magazines, including *Time Magazine* and *People*, was not the original. The altered photo, which was mistakenly used for the article, had been airbrushed so that the post behind the kneeling woman’s head had been removed from the image. The fact that the post had been removed from the image did not change the enormity of the event that was captured on film, but the effort to make the image less distracting also made the reality that was being shown less exact. So even as this image was being used to commemorate our cultural memory of that event, we were in essence remembering something inaccurately. We may still see the magnitude of the event that is being shown but it is not precisely the way it was.



Other examples might include the use of photographic images in Ken Burns' 1996 documentary, "The West." Showing photographs of Native Americans to illustrate the point of contact between them and Spanish conquistadors in the 1500s may illustrate a certain visual context, yet photographic evidence did not become available until the 1800s, raising questions of authenticity and visual ethics. Or, more recently, there was the photographic image of U.S. soldier James Blake Miller smoking a cigarette after the Second Battle of Fallujah during the Iraq War taken by LA Times photographer Luis Sinco. The image, which was published in many U.S. newspapers in 2004, shows a distant look in the Marine's eyes while smoking a cigarette after battle. The photo has since been used to bolster both pro- and anti-sides of the war debate, illustrating further that how media is used or remembered is more often a matter of perspective. A documentary film, "The Marlboro Marine," was made in 2007 about the subject of the photograph showing his subsequent struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder and thoughts of suicide, which then led to an even more contested interpretation.

Addressing these examples, Edwards asserts that multimodal platforms hold the potential to either play a clarifying or distorting role in how mediated memories are interpreted or remembered. Through the use of different devices, across different networks, from different locations, more people can now participate in a dialogue about what we should remember and how we should remember it rather than just being given this one-way, authoritative, institutional narrative. This capacity for people to say, "That isn't what we should remember," or even, "That's not how we should remember it," offers more opportunity for oppositional readings

and broader interpretations through social media than existed before. Though Edwards still thinks people would sometimes prefer to simply be told a story, she sees more evidence of the public contributing their own versions, interpretations, and perspectives to digital cultural heritage through social tagging, annotating, and commenting. This process could play a key role in how our cultural memory is shared.

However, she also warns that despite this democratizing potential, there is equally the problem of digital manipulation, which has significant implications for what and how we remember. She poses the question that in the shifting shadows of the digital realm, where everything that looks real is really just the zeros and ones of coding language, can we even have accurate memories based on media that can be manipulated so easily? “One of the freaky things about technology is that it is so changeable. Because I can go and edit that tomorrow, and it would be different than it is today, and we could do that over and over and over again. One of the big problems that digitization presents to the world is that it is so easily replicable and easily changeable. And how do you know what the authentic original is anymore when it is very easy to Photoshop an object and to replicate it and duplicate it?” (Edwards, 2013). In this regard, she warns that there are serious repercussions to basing our long-term, cultural memory on multimodal platforms, applications, and content, which can be more easily susceptible to future manipulation.

While many extoll the convenience of sharing information among a connected culture, Edwards on the other hand raises several flags of caution over multimodality, including the ease and alacrity with which inaccurate information

can be shared across the broader network. She also laments over how our social behaviors and etiquettes are being dramatically reordered by anonymous participation and pressures to interact with these platforms. Some examples include how a conversation between two people can suddenly be interrupted when one of them begins texting as if the other person present were no longer important; or when in a confined space, such as an elevator, one person is talking loudly on his cell phone as though the space of others is inconsequential; or even the ability to act as a “troll” and just post horrific things because of the anonymity of the Internet.

“One of the things about the older ways of communicating is you can easily filter out. You can just talk to people you want to talk to, right? You talk to family and friends. You might run into some crazy person at the grocery store and angry bank teller or something, and you’re like, ‘Ugh, this person is crazy.’ You walk away. When somebody who’s associated with you or that lives near you or whatever starts posting on your Facebook page all this crazy shit, and you all of a sudden have to figure out ‘How am I going to deal with this person?’ And I have to deal with this person. I can’t just walk away. It adds another level of understanding of who we are as people. It’s very easy to live your life only seeing what you want to see and interacting with people you want to interact with and the people who already agree with you or who you at least can have an understanding of how to talk and how to communicate, and you don’t run into people who are different from you as much. I think it’s human nature to stay away from people who are different from us. And in the social media space you run into these people all the time. There’s trolls who run around and try to goad you and try to make people angry. Everybody who’s online

has to figure out how to deal with these people and what it means” (Edwards, 2013).

Edwards points out that multimodality also forces us to think of how these forms of social pressure to engage can redirect our attention to what we should remember. Where once collective memories were informed by places or events, such as the Gettysburg battlefield or the Kent State massacre, now the things we remember socially are also being driven and gauged by social media activity and digital content being shared. “There’s things....you don’t feel like you know about, and somebody says, ‘Oh, didn’t you see this thing?’ And you didn’t know about it and you’re like, ‘Oh, my god, I’m out of the loop. I need to watch that’ (Edwards, 2013).

Examples range from a person’s Facebook timeline posts to learning about a major news event through someone sharing content on Facebook. An even more impactful example might be the Kony 2012 video that quickly became one of the most shared items on the Internet, or what Time Magazine called “the most viral video of all time” (Carbone, 2012). The short film by Invisible Children, Inc. put an old story about an African warlord who forced children to becoming soldiers into the popular consciousness to the tune of 100 million views in its first six days online. In other words, the sharing of that digital video became almost as memorable of an event as when viewers watched the Space Shuttle Challenger explode on the repeated broadcasts of television news in 1986. It was hard to escape and even more difficult to forget.

According to Baca, head of digital art history access at the GRI, one thing to consider about multimodality is the gatekeeping role of machine intelligence through password protections, firewalls, and algorithms. On one hand, Baca

acknowledges the potential for broader sharing of knowledge across platforms; however, she also recognizes that participation can also be restricted through coding and protocols. In this regard, she is advocating that multimodality of networks and digital platforms can also present a form of selective memory in terms of who can access and contribute to the system.

“Like I say, art history tends to be very conservative because there is no tradition of sharing, even with this idea of sharing data like in the scientific community. [In the scientific community] to be valid you can say we did this big study of atmospheric conditions or whatever, and then they make the whole data set available to back up whatever their thesis or conclusion is. In art history, we haven’t done that up to now. The Getty is saying we’re going to do that by making our big data available. The thing about the more participatory form of memory activity is still, I think, it’s still really iffy in that the art history world is still very hesitant. The Scholars’ Workspace is designed to capture multiple voices, so that’s good. But it’s not multiple voices everybody; it’s multiple voices of whomever is on the research team. The Scholars’ Workspace is designed as a password-protected environment where our research team conducts their work. We can have the multiple voices so you can say, ‘I think this painting is by this guy, and I can say, ‘I think it’s by this other guy.’ We can have different viewpoints, but it’s still very controlled. We’re using something like Facebook to let anybody comment on anything, but that’s not a scholarly publication. It will be interesting to see what happens in the next few years if the GRI and other art historical memory institutions do start implementing some form of expert social tagging, for a lack of better word, where you just let

everybody comment on [digital content]" (Baca, 2013).

However, while Baca considers the ramifications of multimodality on gatekeeping functions, she also reiterates the appeal for how broader access can also be granted through these technologies. "With regard to the digital, for us, it is very important because an institution like the Getty Research Institute at any given time, even if we enlarge the exhibition space downstairs, only a tiny fraction of our collections can be viewed. The rest are locked up in vaults. I mean...the one million books are on shelves. But the materials in Special Collections, which include artwork, three dimensional objects, letters, whole archives, all this stuff is locked up in vaults. If we could share the collective knowledge of scholars to aggregate more information and richness and context, and link to other documents and other things for the information in our collections, it would be a huge step forward for us. So the digital age is our big opportunity to make those available to everyone" (Baca, 2013).

Megan Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library, also considers access made possible by multimodality as having significant implications for the transmission of memory. At the same time, she argues that it is not just about access but also about the self-selecting aspects of digital platforms and the agency of networking possibilities. "This stuff goes viral, you know. And stuff gets seen by far more people than ever would've been seen before ever in human history. You know, some one thing that goes viral. We can post a hundred historic maps, but if only one gets picked by someone on Twitter who has 2,000 followers and half of their 2000 followers...all that. So that's a whole different phenomenon from just making it for access. On our site, we can offer all the stuff for access we want, but if people don't

pick up on it and make transformative and kind of radical, transmissional use out of it..." (Prelinger, M., 2013).

Rick Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library and Archive, expresses the conflict that multimodality in one respect allows for the creation of so much digital material that might not really be meant for remembering, while in other respects it creates opportunities for widespread dissemination, participation, and mediated curation. Prelinger has produced several series of digital films made completely from home movie footage from his collection, such as the *Lost Landscapes* series or *No More Road Trips* film, that invite uninhibited participation and active discourse from the audience. He likens the practice to the lanternslide, travel lecture series from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He thus points out that participating through digital platforms already has a venerable history. To emphasize this point, he mentions previous forms of engagement that were exhibited, from Elizabethan Theatre to the House of Commons to the lanternslide lectures, where oppositional readings and new meaning can be created through lively discussion. What's different with multimodal platforms, though, is how widely distributed that content and conversation can now be.

"I think with this mass, when the number of content/production events every day's in the billions... It's like the mycelium connecting the mushrooms underground...doesn't knit together into one thick rope. It's just so distributed. It's probably a change, change made possible by scale. How much of it will be remembered? You can't really keep track. But we may then end up arguing out of this the consequence that it's simply the active participating with the referent or

what brings us to participate is less relevant” (Prelinger, R., 2013). He also wonders how much of it is supposed to be remembered or if it is all just a matter of telepresence, sharing the moment through some form of media, but not really intending for it to be saved. Remarking on the issue in this way also leads to the questioning of our normal, everyday experiences and whether we intend for them to be remembered either. In essence, is the choice of recording and sharing that experience through a mediated form already indicating that it is being chosen as a memory whether we revisit it or not? Once the content is shared, does that not also expand the memory of participation into a platformed community of memory?

For Prelinger, what deserves more attention are the gatekeepers in this mediated environment and those who become the new authorities for what gets distributed and remembered. “For a lot of people it’s Boing Boing. For some people it’s Reddit. These are net-savvy people. For me it’s Twitter. Twitter is my prime point of access to the world. And so, you know, who do I follow and I’m constantly churning who I follow. I follow a bunch of scholars and academics until they start talking too much about their cats or their romantic disappointment or about the virtue of kale. And when they go that way, I tend to unfollow them. But that, for me, has been an incredible curatorial influence. Every day, 10 or 15 people tweet something that’s really provocative or interesting relating to archives, to cultural memory, to access to materials. I email that tweet to myself. For a lot of people, of course, it’s Facebook. And the funny thing about Facebook is that it isn’t just friends and peers, it’s these algorithms, which are quite mysterious. When I tell people what you see on Facebook depends on whether you’re friends with somebody and you



look at their profile, but it also has to do with whether they look at you. You may be seeing your stalkers show up because of the secret sauce. But it would be interesting to think of this algorithmic tyranny, the invisible hand as almost randomizing influence. It's like the dice that there's some chance that ultimately you tend to gravitate towards trusted [source]. So I'm not on Facebook anymore. I just couldn't deal with the noise. But when I was on Facebook and somebody said something interesting, I would click it to see what was on their wall, what else did they say, what was going on...and same with Twitter. If it's somebody I find interesting, I'll go and look back at their tweets. And there's a lot of that going on...people are constantly pointing to films, pointing to occurrences of films or enunciations of films within different places" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

By following these connective tissues, it becomes obvious to Prelinger that trusted sources, opinion leaders, and gatekeepers are increasingly found through social media applications and multimodal platforms that are directing people's attentions and traffic through following, linking, commenting, posting, and tweeting. Another interesting element to this point is that because of the "Long Tail," which stipulates that the Internet allows for digital content to be revisited for old fans or to be introduced to new fans, there is a refreshing or referencing practice. Such practices allow content and information to be rediscovered later, much like a memory. But one of the places that Prelinger sees as having particular potential for remembering is the sharing of home movies in digital form.

"Yeah, they're much more interesting. It's all I care about now. It's cinema as far as I'm concerned. We know very little about home movies. There were the

people that theorized them in the 80s who did important work...Patty Zimmerman and Karen Zuniga and a bunch of other people, Karen Shelton, and then there were younger groups of scholars. It's still up for grabs. I always love what Cory Doctorow says about the Internet. He says, 'We got to stop saying Internet this and Internet that. Let's not say Internet censorship anymore. Let's just say censorship because the Internet and the world have merged. They're congruent spaces. They're coextensive spaces.' And I kind of feel the same way about home movies because home movies are, in practice, infinite. There's just frickin' billions of home movies and although not everything was photographed...well, almost everything turns out to have been photographed, but not every particular enunciation of an event or a practice or a transaction or a relationship between...not every activity has been photographed. But when we talk about home movies, we're really talking about the world. We're talking about that vast...we're talking about culture in general, so it's sometimes hard for me to engage, to put my heart into a discussion about the specificity of what's happening in a home movie, because I think you have to very quickly look outside the boundaries of that signifying practice to see what's really going on. So when you go online and you're looking at text you skim it, when you look at photographs, you skim them. When a movie comes up, it demands a certain level of attention" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Prelinger uses his love of spreading home movies in analog and digital form as a platform to talking about mediated curation and privileging practices. He argues that much like what people choose to capture in their home movies, networked multimodal platforms and social media applications also give users the

ability to privilege the information they want to contribute and share, and from those choices more is revealed about interests, preferences, and relationships with the technology. However, from this multiplicity of viewpoints, he argues, users still need a vantage point from which to remember. For example, how differently might we frame the assassination of John F. Kennedy, if everyone there had cell phones to record the tragedy?

“Well, the question is actually different because it turns out there’s about 60 home movies of peripherally or directly about the Kennedy assassination, and they’re at the Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas and every so often people use —and none of them are as explicit as the Zapruder film. But the point is we need the Zapruder film. That’s what we watch, and that’s what we come back to. And there’s been much less interest in looking at the others. We need that one” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Despite the fact that Prelinger insists the Internet offers immense freedom and a space for cultural expression, he also has a sense that what is most telling about our choices is what we are choosing to record, share, and how we are inhabiting certain spaces online. “Yeah. Online it’s like...I was just in Canberra, Australia, to consult for the Australian National Film of Sound Archive. And Canberra is the capital, and it’s in the middle of the bush; and it’s filled with cultural institutions. It has more galleries, more museums, more performing arts events. It has more stuff going on than people to go to it. It’s the same thing with the Internet. There’s just too much going on. It’s so interesting because people talk about cultural practice as essential to maintaining culture, maintaining social cohesion,

maintaining memory. And right now in post-industrial society, people are drawn by the bread and circuses, and the number of people who are in touch with these cultural memory practices that refresh and keep it alive is minority. You can argue that halftime football game stuff has some relation to that. I don't know, I think a lot of times it's more people going through certain kinds of motions, singing along with 'Born in the USA' without knowing what the lyrics really are..." (PRELINGER, R., 2013).

Roger MacDonald of the Internet Archive thinks of multimodality as offering more profound modes of remembering by thinking of mediated memories as forms of metadata that can be analyzed and interpreted in innovative ways. "I think these recordings are selections of our collective memory to the extent that they are available. They become part of our collective memory and are more accessible for future information archaeologists, which like the Internet Archive, is intending to provide the ease of access to knowledge. In the data science perspective, it also provides ease of analytical insight. We're just right at the dawn of large-scale analysis. This digital collection provides a nearly unparalleled access to what it is to be human. We look at the Internet Archive as just another facet of the media we look to preserve. The way we preserve it, we are treating media as data. There's no real difference between books, images, media...it's all data. Though some of this data are much harder to crack and what makes it easier to crack is having metadata. Inadvertently, having closed captioning has created this valuable metadata so that television can now be searched in a fashion as never before possible. Using grammatical English and keywords, some data can be searched that is not even

close-captioned, which is a step toward moving those media toward metadata enrichment, to larger scale algorithmic analysis” (MacDonald, 2014).

In fact, MacDonald sees the multimodality of experiencing digital content through different devices, across different networks, in different locations as offering a significant difference in memory practices. He thinks this is mostly because we are being driven outside traditional notions of memory creators and for what we can do with the digital content. In other words, in addition to providing additional access, multimodal platforms are providing new ways to search previous materials. These new search functions change the ways users can refer to digital content, establishing another node for collective memory that has implications for cultural heritage or beyond.

“If you look at it only through the avenue of contextualization...whatever it is you are looking at, seeing, or interacting with, on whatever platform, can now be dynamically contextualized, not only by yourself, but through machine intelligence. The relationship between what you are watching and the moment you are watching it, coupling powerful moments of media experience, you can take advantage of that textually rich experience and do something more with it, be engaged, connect, and ...the route to this is machine intelligence applying dynamic contextualization. We’re just on this threshold of being able to ask these questions of our past. The Internet Archive is looking to 1) preserve our past; and 2) continue to preserve our past while opening up the past for large-scale analysis within our digital era” (MacDonald, 2014).

Stefano Boni, head volunteer of the Prelinger Archive, proposes that the

capabilities of multimodality, of being able to observe something on different devices, in any location, then share it with someone else or comment on it, entirely changes the context. As a film preservationist, Boni has observed that this contextual change offers a broader viewing experience by making it more accessible to a wider audience, changes the rate of how its viewed, and offers a more personal, intimate experience to be shared more readily.

“I mean, I think it’s great that it’s made more accessible. I think it’s great that it sees a wider audience, and [in] one sense I feel like it’s a sort of preservation...It’s a lot more detail than actually just making a copy and, you know, passing around. But I think being able to make it more accessible kind of puts it out there, and I think it’s really great how Rick [Prelinger] is having these films digitized and putting them online so pretty much anybody can see them and put their input into them. But it does change the experience in that...well, like with the home movie, for example. A lot of these films, I think, are things that people got to see once every few years when their parents or grandparents pull out the projector and then they sat around watched them, basically. I think it was more an ephemeral experience, you know. They probably forgot about what happened or might have some memories about whatever event that was in the film, and then they relived it briefly. So on the one hand, I think if you have a copy of something that is more easily accessible, like you can watch it on your phone or you can watch it on your computer, it changes it. I don’t want to say that it makes it less special, but it changes it. But also at the same time, with some other audience is looking at somebody’s home movies — somebody that doesn’t have anything to do with that family or those films — it’s a totally

different experience. Like I know looking at home movies that my father took of my family, watching those, I've thought after working on this project...I thought, 'Wow, I kind of take for granted looking at some other people's home movies' that they're cooler, they're funny or whatever. But when it's my own, you know, my own family, I have a personal attachment to it. It's a totally different experience. So I could see why, some movies, maybe people don't want people to see them even though it might be a totally everyday event. It might have a personal significance that they wouldn't necessarily...some other audience might — who has detachment — might not understand it" (Boni, 2013).

Boni also considers the interaction of multimodality that people can experience as changing the memory process, as well. He argues that being able to "like," comment, share, or repurpose digital content is a much different experience than simply viewing something and can lead to a deeper, more personal level of remembering. "Yeah, I think it totally changes it. Certainly, if somebody's looking for footage and use it for something that's different, something that they created, I think it's a totally different experience. I think they have a different feeling about it. And there's all sort of stuff that comes up as far as like personal feeling about what they're looking at but also being a part of the process, you know?" (Boni, 2013).

Through his work preserving home movies in the Prelinger Archive, as well as having previously been a photo lab technician, Boni sees the multimodality of being able to contribute, share, and interact with digital content as also having led to other changes in social practice. For instance, he says that because there are few barriers to user-generated materials there is now an increase in narcissistic self-

documentation, different views about intimacy, and fewer concerns over privacy, something that was a bit more absent when individuals had to have their film developed.

“Yeah well, I think...this is my interpretation: I think the idea years ago of doing that was...unless somebody was able to process it themselves in their own little dark room, I think it’s less likely you see that because these are basically sent to big labs. I think the labs have the ability to look at this stuff. I mean, I used to work in a photo lab myself. You couldn’t process or print someone’s film without looking at it. That was just part of the job. So I think maybe there was more of a consciousness of that, that somebody could see this, and it was less likely that people would photograph....Well, I think the other thing, too, what seems like a casual moment in somebody’s living room....What seems very ordinary — what I was saying before about how the difference between something I would see in my own family home movies versus the way I interpret other people’s home movies — it’s like seeing something completely ordinary like walking on the beach, and yet that might have been a personal moment to the person that photographed it, you know? So that part of it it’s hard to say. Would that person if they were still around, assuming that they’re not...would they want other people seeing that? As far as though more intimate... And it’s funny, too, because nowadays people have the devices like digital cameras to be able to take more intimate photos or pictures or whatever, and yet they choose to put them in a larger viewing space” (Boni, 2013).

Another element to this beyond just what people might consider about sharing intimate details is the immediacy of these technologies that allows so much



to be documented so easily. Boni indicates that this also has a dramatic influence on just how much we choose to document and share because using these devices has become part of our everyday routines and incorporated into almost every activity. “I feel like because people have cameras on their phones that they’re able to take pictures of things that happen every day. I know there was video a couple months ago of some guy at a BART station, harassing a bunch of the people going in and out. And the video was posted on SFGate, and suddenly it was a big deal. Apparently the event had taken place like a month before and, when I personally saw this video, I looked online for some mention of this incident that happened a month before. I could barely find a tiny little blurb that didn’t explain anything to the extent of what was actually seen in the video. I think that’s really interesting because as soon as it goes online, this little video that someone took on their phone, there’s suddenly awareness of it. Suddenly everyone has an opinion and can see what happened. Like Facebook. So many people have Facebook accounts and, you know, you like the thing and then somebody sees that you liked it and then in an hour or two a whole bunch of people have seen it. Yeah, it totally changes the way...what kind of news or what is news, what kind of things that people find fascinating, what are interesting, but also the rate of how it’s viewed. Yeah, I think especially, too, like digital stuff...it’s so easy to make a video on your camera on your phone and put it online” (Boni, 2013).

According to Boni, this ease of collection and sharing is an entirely different experience than previous forms of media recording and presentation. This fact leaves him with the sense that there is also a significant difference in aura and

thoughts of permanence when comparing analog versions of media to the easy-to-capture, distributive, and replicable forms of multimodal media. In his mind, then, there is a certain preciousness to the analog media memories because they are not as ubiquitous, saturating, and common as those being shared across multimodal platforms, social media, and digital networks.

“I think one of the things that’s interesting about this stuff [the analog home movie collection] is because it’s older, you hear about a lot of people, a lot of families who just threw their movies away. It just seems it’s a lot more fragile and there’s less of it. I mean, there’s a ton of it — obviously, you can see just this room there’s a ton of stuff — but for example, film not everybody was able to...I mean, not everybody had a camera and was able to shoot home movies on film and then have them processed. They were expensive. But it seems like with digital, it seems everybody has some way of shooting a video, so I think the fact that not just that it’s older but there seems to be less of it maybe makes it fascinating to go through all of these old films” (Boni, 2013).

The aspect that photographer Suzanne Levine highlights when considering multimodality is not just having access to digital content but having the connected ability to apply that information to some form of action. “You know, where you sign one of the petitions and you get an email back saying this is what happened once the petition was signed about how things changed or didn’t change. I think that is very meaningful. Because then you feel like you are making a difference and you’re not just aimlessly clicking on things. That feedback loop is important and impactful for me. That helps me remember, I guess you could say, it helps make an impression on

me” (Levine, 2014).

According to Levine, who got her master’s in visual anthropology and worked on using images to elicit emotions and memory for her research in Mexico, the networked elements of multimodality also encourage broader meaning because it can connect people easier for the sharing of knowledge. “I mean, yeah, for instance, on Facebook there was a woman who passed away and there was a memorial event and I went and photographed the event. I gave the organizers a CD with all of the images and they uploaded them and asked people to tag everyone I photographed. That interactive process where people named relatives or people I didn’t know by name....I mean, that event already had meaning to begin with, but that process of going through and trying to tag people, I would say that helped with creating memory or an archive of memory” (Levine, 2014).

She currently vacillates between her own smartphone, a tablet, a desktop, and a laptop, which she uses most for her work because she expresses an interest in being able to use large print and multiple screens for better navigation and viewing. However, she explains, each device provides its own experience. When it comes to people sharing their lived memories from things they’ve recorded or digital content they find interesting, she believes that the people can use these networked technologies to provide meaning, share their experience, and participate in an exchange that will provide a wealth of information for future historians to look back on that wasn’t available from previous generations.

Though Levine still prefers firsthand experience with the brushstrokes of a painting in a museum, she acknowledges that the conversation that constructs

meaning in that setting may be relegated to those in the room, or the institutional voice in a plaque on the wall, whereas the online discussion is a permanent space of conversation and negotiation from different time periods, different geographies, different cultures, that can all happen on a continuous basis. For her, the real issue is agency and choice, in terms of how she represents her identity, such as divulging personal information or posting personal updates, and deciding where she wants to get involved.

“I think both situations are self-selecting. The Internet is 24-7 and has a broader reach, but I think it is self-selecting in the types of people who would choose to participate in each of those environments. What institutions choose to collect also indicate what is culturally significant, say if you have an image in your house that is also in the Smithsonian, but I see it only as a reference point....Speaking of personal, though, I’m going to my 40<sup>th</sup> reunion of my middle school. My dad, with a Super-8 camera, got my culmination from 6<sup>th</sup> grade on film. For the 30<sup>th</sup> reunion, I put it on a videotape and showed it. Everyone wanted a copy, but I wasn’t sure how I felt about having my personal culmination being in others’ possessions. But I also brought with me the Super-8 camera I grew up with and I had one roll with me (3-min. on the cartridge) and taped all these people answering the question of what they remember from middle school. The tapes are getting kind of deteriorated so I’ll transfer it from Super-8 to DVD. But do I really want my childhood tapes to go into my classmates’ collections? So now all these people whose names I don’t even know will have my culmination on a tape somewhere. I’ll look at anybody else’s photos or images. But I’m not carefree about my own images” (Levine, 2014).

In terms of the bigger picture of how to remember the past through these multimodal devices, Levine is not convinced things will necessarily be more remembered more accurately. But, she does believe the networked connections will allow for more breadth and discussion to determine significance around the broader conversation and interaction that is being documented. To her, the ubiquity of these devices in our daily lives and their persistent use practically guarantees more evidence of how and what we want to remember. “I have pulled things off the Internet that have been very useful for me to understand the history of the disability movement and use that for presentations, by pulling things off online archives and use them in PowerPoint presentations, and having the accessibility of that is significant. The process is definitely changing. As a photographer, having a client being able to download an image, where I used to have to print a file, carefully package, and special mail it. The process of collecting of information and sharing it has radically changed. I see it as a shared information storytelling. It may not necessarily be accurate but it is somebody’s memory and information that people can go back and refer to. In terms of documentation, it definitely helps for the memory. It is a type of memory and is a part of our community, our cultural construct” (Levine, 2014).

While she sees the documentation of digital interaction as a benefit of multimodality, Levine also worries by how decentralized and dispersed information can be when dealing with multiple screens, on multiple devices, across multiple networks, from multiple locations. There are so many sources and options to divert everyone’s attentions, she laments that it is increasingly difficult to get everyone

involved in a conversation in the same place and that it is now actually more work to find the right information in the right place.

Archivist and collections manager Kylie Pine of the Willamette Heritage Center has a more ambivalent approach to the possibilities of multimodality in reference to remembering. Part of this, she explains, is that her experience with using multimodal platforms to get her community to interact with the center's collection has yielded mixed results. She has not received an overwhelming response to many of the items she posts on her blog nor found an inordinate number of visits to her website or those searching for digital objects within the collection.

At the same time, Pine admits that the possible scale and scope of interaction could dramatically increase because of the interconnected nature of the multimodal platforms she is only now beginning to use. She has observed several examples of this interconnectedness leading to the sharing of knowledge and community interaction. "So another area we're using the Internet is — we have a blog. The blog started out as an idea that we could make our collections more accessible, put things up there, people could search them, people would know that we had stuff and get people to come in and see what we had or use it because we've got this ginormous space with thousands of artifacts and thousands of paper records. But if no one uses it, there's really no point in us keeping it. So it was a great idea, really excited. It's kind of morphed over time. The other option, too, is that you can comment on the blog so there's a participatory aspect of it. So if you've got a story or might ask questions and ask open-ended questions at the ends: I don't understand things or I

don't recognize things. We put up mystery photos, all kinds of things. Very limited response, if at all, and I'm finding more and more that the responses — I may post something and I may not get a response for two to three years. So I mean, two years is a long time. It's not that immediate impact that I had thought the digital age would bring us. But it's working, I guess, in that way" (Pine, 2013).

Pine does recall one example where the interconnectedness of networks brought together several pieces to a puzzle that helped her complete a picture that might not otherwise have been formed. A woman had brought in to the heritage center a collection of unknown photographs that they were going to cut up and use for art supplies. After noticing a clearly visible name of a person in one of the photographs, a volunteer started doing a little online research and discovered a woman who was writing a blog about her family's history. "It turned out there was a family connection. So being able to talk to this person helped us figure out whom most of the people in the images were. We were able to put together the history of it. So that's powerful" (Pine, 2013).

Pine also has experienced firsthand how multimodal platforms can foster outreach at the same time they allow her to reorganize her own archival practices. "I have these really great visions. Coming in and finding a way inside the exhibit for people to give their feedback, their stories. The Internet is great for that. Let's start using the Internet. Let's get people to participate. But getting people to participate in those what I think are very democratic, very open [technologies] has been very difficult for us. I've been using my favorite tool of all time. It's Google Documents, which you can create this form and you can create these surveys, so before I had to

go out and do interviews of people or have them fill out paper survey to do this kind of collecting of stories. I think this is great: You can go home and you can do this. It'll sort it all in these little things. It'll flip it right over into this spreadsheet so all of these stories, all of the questions, will have these columns of this information. It's like taking half the work for me. I've also been using this blog to help me organize my thoughts so I get a lot of tidbits of information and if it's not something that's really pertinent to our collection, sometimes it just goes by the way side. But now I'm using the blog actually, with the search feature here on the blog, to be able to help me remember these little tidbits of information so 'Oh yeah, I know I just talked to somebody about this woman so I can look. Oh yeah, I just posted about that, and there's all the research that I had done.' So in some ways, what started out as an external-looking feature has actually turned into a way for me to organize these little things that would otherwise fall off my desk or get piled on my desk" (Pine, 2013).

While Pine would like to see even more interaction from the community with her own multimodal platforms, she does agree that there is potential for the broader sharing of content, information, experiences, and memories in different formats. Pine remains hopeful that in using these multimodal platforms and putting content into a networked, digital space, all it will take is that one item from her collection, that one post, or that one story to "catch people's imagination and start conversations and change....For me, yeah the accessibility may be there. There's the potential, but does it actually happen? And I think there's a point for us where there's a value judgment about what's worth doing, what's going to be useful for the



institution as a whole. You shouldn't be doing technology just for the sake of doing technology. You have to do it with a purpose and a point. And is it worth me doing it? I'm obviously going to think it is" (Pine, 2013).

For Willamette Heritage Center volunteer Sandy Bond, the issue of multimodality is ease of use and increased access. "It just makes the access easier. You can be pretty much anywhere and access information. You're not tied down to a computer connected to a telephone line. You have the ability to access the information whenever and wherever you want. Whether you have an interest in finding that information or not, you can. If I'm shopping and I want to find something, I can search the name of a store, find it pretty easily and go there. I don't have to go home and look it up or find a phone book and look it up" (Bond, 2013).

Beyond the ease of being able to use these platforms wherever and whenever, Bond also finds appealing the networked nature of these platforms, which allows for broader scales of interest to be linked together and increased opportunities for participation. "I posted something about the museum on my Facebook page and my friend liked it and then his friends will see that on their Facebook pages and that increases the opportunity for people to know about something. To like and share something makes the museum visible to them that might not have been otherwise" (Bond, 2013).

However, Bond also envisions problems with the overwhelming amount of material that is being documented digitally, shared more broadly, and that may come to define our digital lives. "Getting to it would be pretty overwhelming and hard to sort through. My sense is that a lot of it won't be very useful. I mean it's bits

and pieces of information, and I guess you can put stories together with those bits and pieces, but I'm just not sure how revealing it will be" (Bond, 2013).

Prelinger Library volunteer Heather Jovanelli expresses a great deal of reservation about multimodality. While she enjoys contributing, sharing, and curating her own digital content on social media applications, such as Instagram and Tumblr, she also sees how the attachment to these technologies in our daily lives could lead to mass distraction as much as connected cultural memory. For example, visitors to the Louvre Museum in Paris can wait in line to see the famed Leonardo da Vinci painting, "The Mona Lisa," only to take a picture of it with their cell phone and walk away. She wonders if they are going to remember the photograph they took or the experience of seeing the great work of art firsthand.

"It's true that there is a risk that people may actually disregard the actual experience....it's hard to explain, but I guess I'm worried that people using their phones too much will distract them from reality, from what's happening in their real life. They'll be distracted by trying to capture or preserve the moment when it would probably be more beneficial for them to be present in the moment rather than to put it on their phone to show off to a friend. But I don't know what other people do with it. I think they probably just look at it and forget it. Or maybe they don't. As far as memory goes in how it's enhanced or how it's detracted, I feel like our brains are rewiring to accommodate using these tools in our daily lives. But I think that cultural memory is influenced by digital platforms and technology, for sure" (Jovanelli, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter further extends the level of discourse surrounding (1) the presumed role of heritage institutions as both arbiters of memory and sites of debate/contestation; (2) the differences between the authenticity of experiencing digital surrogates and source objects in their institutional context; and (3) the discursive themes regarding multimodality, including dimensions of choice, uninhibited participation, simultaneous presence, larger viewing spaces, broader scale of interest, and other composite aspects of selection and sharing. The purpose for doing so is to clarify the primary reasons these cultural heritage institutions were chosen as objects of study: they consider themselves to be sites of debate, contestation, and dissemination of cultural history, production, and memory.

As evidenced by their own discursive interpretations, heritage practitioners and participants self-identify with the stated purpose of being the negotiators of what and how communities remember. By recognizing that these institutions play a significant role in the formation of cultural, social, and collective memory, we are able to see how different the experience of remembering might be when individuals are interacting with a heritage institution's collections through digital platforms and social media applications. It is no longer about making memories with particular content but also what people are doing with it in this multimodal context.

In reviewing these various perspectives, it should be clear that cultural heritage practitioners and participants are still giving much thought to the difference of experience between interacting with original content versus digital

simulations. Though the goal of heritage institutions might be to promote an air of authenticity, as they increasingly embrace and utilize multimodal platforms, they will also have to contend with the multiplicity of perceptions about what people consider to be authentic experience. Some regard the original and the digital to be complementary rather than oppositional. Some feel that the digital will lead to disorientation in terms of participant attention. To some, the digital offers more context rather than less. Some argue that context itself should be considered a faulty construction, authenticity should not be considered the same thing as accuracy, or maybe there can simply be no guarantee of either originality or authenticity. However, there is recognition that different dimensions of choice offer different potentials and that people have become accustomed to simultaneous presence. There is also a risk that the mediated versions will come to replace the actual experience. Combined, this means that there are many ways to consider the implications of experiencing the actual versus the digital.

Cultural heritage practitioners and participants also expressed their views as to what they consider to be the implications of multimodality on memory. One net effect is the promise of broader participation and performative qualities, which allow for more sharing of interests, experience, and content. Multimodality is also considered to offer broader access and direct relationships between heritage institutions and their participants, expanding the conversation and enabling more extensive transmission of digital heritage artifacts and shared memory in the new media landscape. Also highlighted were the expansion of possible connections as well as filtering processes that both remove and produce various levels of control

and gatekeeping measures. Respondents also negotiated their interpretations of new forms of analysis and manipulation, changes to social practice and etiquette, and the contextual changes that redirect our attention through the scale and scope of multimodal platforms.

This chapter examines and clarifies approaches, conditions, and implications of multimodality on memory practices. The next chapter focuses on the specific participatory elements and digital practices that demonstrate how communities articulate shared memory in a multimodal context.

## CHAPTER VI

### NEW MEMORY PRACTICES THROUGH MULTIMODAL PLATFORMS

*New social practices and cultural forms emerge at the crossroads of memory and media, and even if we cannot yet label them, it is important to mark their appearance.*  
(Van Dijck, 20007, p. 176)

Whereas the previous chapters have addressed the discursive interpretations for how multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital media are redefining the conceptualizations, institutions, and processes of cultural heritage, as well as how multimodality is reshaping the experience of interacting with digital heritage, this chapter will delve more specifically into and clarify the participatory elements of digital social practice and behavior that are constitutive of new memory practices. Through examination of meanings afforded to specific activities and interactions with digital heritage content, several themes emerge for understanding how shared memory is constructed in a digital landscape.

This chapter will address three predominant themes: (1) privileging platforms; (2) privileging practices; and (3) privileging participation. The themes emerged as persistence threads of discussion during in-depth interviews with respondents and illustrate the considerations given to where digital interaction and activity occurs, how it occurs, and why it occurs in digital cultural heritage. Each topic also re-interprets the digital practices of posting, commenting, expressing data, sharing, repurposing, or alternative curation of digital heritage content as prime examples for how to rethink memory practices in a multimodal context. In considering these forms of digital practice and meaning, we also direct our attention

to forms of analysis, tagging, cataloging, aggregation, and searching as equivalent forms of selective memory recall, retention, and sharing through multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital media.

Among these primary themes emerge several other subordinate issues. These include new methods and considerations for adapting content to various platforms; linking data between institutions and users; inviting collaboration; monitoring new threads of discussion; the surprises of sharing digital material; the processes of discovery; and the computational analyses of metrics. All of which bear some relation to new digital behaviors that demonstrate how communities articulate shared memory in the new media landscape.

So, while the previous chapters examine how digital platforms and concepts of multimodality are impacting cultural heritage writ large, this chapter looks at how heritage professionals and participants are actually using these platforms and what such activity means to them in the process. Interrogating specific methods of interaction provides fresh insight into how we use a variety of multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital interfaces to construct shared memories in digital cultural heritage. In essence, our choices illustrate what we want to remember and how we want to remember it through the ways in which we interact with cultural heritage collections using digital platforms and social media applications. Thus, what constitutes multimodal memory practices comes into clearer focus by further examining these digital activities and interactions.

## **PRIVILEGING PLATFORMS**

The first step to understanding how we participate with digital cultural heritage is to realize that certain choices are made as to which digital platforms and social media applications should be used and for what purpose. Such decisions are influenced by first determining the purpose and capabilities of specific platforms and social media, as well as by developing a clear vision about how best to adapt digital content and assets to the various platforms. By understanding the parameters of how specific platforms and social media operate, cultural heritage professionals and participants can choose where and how to represent their digital content, as well as decide how to interact with the content and each other in the process.

For instance, senior Web writer/editor Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department makes it clear that measuring which type of social media platform is best depends on what is trying to be accomplished. “Each one is very different. They have different strengths. They have different audiences. YouTube is obviously for videos. Tumblr is really good if you want to show just images. It’s not so good for a lot of text and conversation. Facebook is good for conversation. So they all have their different purposes. We use them very much for the goals of whatever the project is” (Edwards, 2013).

While each has its own place and utility in the context of digital heritage, determining which social media application makes the most sense for what you’re trying to accomplish is becoming just as crucial in digital heritage as choosing what



content should be preserved, exhibited, and interpreted.

For Kylie Pine of the Willamette Heritage Center, part of this decision-making process involves understanding how best to apply these social media applications. “Sure, so we have a Twitter feed. We’ve also got a Facebook page that we use more as a marketing tool than anything else. Although I’ve been trying to put pictures up of our artifacts and talk about things, ask questions, be engaging on that level and providing access points to our collections through that. We have a blog that we use and that we put information in. I’ve been experimenting with Flickr and using Flickr to create online exhibits. We do exhibits of bringing the artifacts back and taking pictures and putting them up there so people can look at them, comment on them, talk about that and have an online access. Those are kind of the basic areas we’re looking at social media wise. I mean, traditional Internet-wise, we’ve got a website; we’ve got a presence there” (Pine, 2013).

Adding complexity to this decision of which platform to use is a whole new set of criteria for how to use it. Decisions now must also be made as to whether it is sufficient to adapt digital content to a particular platform or if other capabilities – such as tracking activity, alternative curation practices, posting, indexing, commenting, tagging, sharing, or even creating new interactive environments – can be introduced. There also is the question of which networks or devices will be used for access and interaction. This requires closer inspection of metrics reports to determine if users are connecting and interacting with digital heritage primarily through their smartphones or which social media applications are recording the most activity. All of these considerations point to a new reality, which is how

platforms are being privileged now constitutes a significant part of the conversation in digital heritage.

Considering the ways in which these digital heritage platforms and social media applications are used, it is clear that each institution is experiencing an increase in participatory activities through a variety of these interactive interfaces (see metrics reporting for each site in Chapter Three). That is to say that much of the digital interaction that is taking place – the searching, the commenting on, the liking, and the sharing of content – involves the privileging of platforms for specific uses. The following demonstrates some of the reasons for how and why heritage professionals and participants choose certain platforms and applications for specific purposes.

According to Anne Helmreich of the Getty Foundation, the social media team of the GRI uses its blog in combination with the applications of Facebook, Twitter, and even YouTube to track user engagement and initiate certain conversations. Once a week, through a program called *Getty Voices*, a different department of the Getty will write about a particular issue in its *Iris* magazine and blog. This may involve a discussion about new acquisitions to its collection, art restoration and preservation, new programs, or how provenance is determined and tracked, among other topics. That department will then be responsible for taking the reins of the Getty social media platforms by responding to Facebook posts and Twitter feeds to contribute to that dialog.

“I think that is a smart way for the institution to handle that. You don’t want everyone here answering all the Facebook posts at any one time, so if you just go

department by department, week by week, then you can be in charge of the theme and decide what we want to talk about, and then invite collaboration with the community that way. It becomes a little bit more manageable than just throwing it all out there at once. The *Iris* blog is the driver for that. You'll see a theme announced there each week. But then it shapes Facebook posts, it shapes Twitter feeds, Google Plus hangouts, and some of that content sometimes gets moved to the Getty YouTube channel. There's a lot of different things happening here and it's a way for different areas to highlight their activities and engage with the public. It also means that no one area has to take the burden of being the content producers" (Helmreich, 2013).

In managing these social media communications and conversations for the GRI, Liz McDermott focuses much of her attention on determining which digital platform is the most appropriate for drumming up the most interest, conducting certain activities, and conveying certain content. "If we have things that we want to get out that might be of interest to the general public, I'll see if we can get it on the museum's Twitter feed because that goes out to half a million people so it gets out and about to all kinds of people. On the website, for example, it's a big website with a lot of sections. And so part of what I do is just getting content and sharing what these different departments are doing...like if we have these new acquisitions, I will get those up. Or it could be as mundane as the library has a whole bunch of new rules it wants the people to know about so we try to get that out. We're really busy with a lot of that. And then on the Facebook page, I'll just try to pull things that I think seem appropriate to the platform so that gets back to...if I'm looking at a

different platform, I'll try to think, 'Well, how do people use that platform? Or how do they like to digest the information? What kinds of things do they like or be interested in based on the platform?' So for Facebook, with stuff that's heavily image-driven or things that I could put intriguing little sound bites or a sentence or two because people have a super short attention span, [I will put it] on the news feed. So that's the kind of thing we're thinking about as far as how do we adapt for various platforms. We have a lot of the discussions about that" (McDermott, 2013).

What this indicates is that there is a shift in thinking about how to tailor information, in terms of how cultural heritage institutions construct what to broadcast that must now consider both the platform and the audience that uses that particular platform. Gone are the days of such one-way transmission models as press releases. McDermott posits that to convey information more effectively through a networked environment requires considering the nuances of each social media applications, its user community, and subsequently adapting content and interactive possibilities to the parameters of each platform.

"That's the fun part of the job...is adapting it to the different platforms. And then we just make decisions about how best to do that - what will work for here, what will work for there. Thinking sort of on that, too, I know they're slowly changing because Trust Communication especially, they're very old school where it was all about the press release and bargaining with the journalists, which is still part of it. But they're increasingly starting to...this person that I work with over there she might break a story on a blog instead of issuing a press release now. We've had a nice result with that where either someone here writes a blog or she's got somebody

else that's writing a blog, and then we make links to it or we can post an album of images that tie into the blog. So there's all kinds of different things you could do" (McDermott, 2013).

Thus, McDermott asserts, the trick to knowing how to prioritize a particular platform involves understanding which digital delivery system will reach the broadest audience and stir the greatest reaction. "I kind of let the content dictate it rather than me. Like recently, we had a curator here who did this really cool project; it's called 'LA Liber Amicorum.' He got a bunch of local graffiti artists who they brought over here to look at some special collections, and they were really taken with this [manuscript of artwork from the 1600s called *Liber Amicorum*]. It's basically a book of people drawing and writing for their friends. And these graffiti artists said, 'We can do that. Let's make a modern-day version of this.' So they got 140 artists to create this amazing book. And so we each made a Web presence and put it online. That's the perfect thing for social media, for example, because a lot of those artists have Tumblr feeds and Twitter and Facebook so that's easy to figure out that should have a strong social media presence. And it did. It got passed around, and people shared those images all over the place" (McDermott, 2013).

While McDermott concedes that most of the time and effort is spent on maintaining the GRI's Facebook page, she says that sometimes privileging other platforms is a pretty straightforward decision. For instance, when there is a particular scholarly conference, it is easy to record the event and post it on YouTube so that people can view it even if they could not attend in person. However, what McDermott finds more interesting is how determining the placement of Web

presence does not necessarily equate to the extent of where it might end up because of digital sharing, linking, and repurposing. “I like not being in control of it, and I don’t know what it does to the process. That’s the thing. So my job here is to do what I can to set it up and be as accurate as possible about content, to look at the platforms and where I’m presenting it, to be as intuitive and sensitive to the platform and how people like to use it, and whatever resources I have available, the time to get it out in the way I think would be best, and after that...[wherever it ends up] that’s just great” (McDermott, 2013).

At the same time, McDermott notes that not everyone she works with agrees with her on this point. To some, this lack of control makes them nervous for the obvious reasons that content may be appropriated and re-used in ways that are counter to their original intent. Perhaps the lesson to be learned from this point is that cultural heritage institutions may play a much larger role in initiating the conversation by determining which platform to use, but have much less say over how the conversation is continued or what conclusions are reached.

According to Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust, this represents one of the most significant challenges cultural institutions face when inviting more public participation and encouraging more interaction through social media applications. Though privileging certain platforms and social media applications brings a host of new opportunities for increased engagement and participation, there is still an array of lessons to be learned about how those choices should be made.

Edwards refers to a project initiated through the Getty blog and then extended through the museum Facebook page, which itself boasts more than a

hundred thousand followers with active commenting and conversations. The intent of the project was to initiate some of the conversations that take place with docents in the museum galleries and then carry them further through the blog and then the Facebook page as a topic of the week, often related to a specific object in the museum collection. Edwards explained that the purpose was not to simply have docents explain the significance of an object but rather prompt questions that could lead to the discussion being tied to larger cultural issues. For example, discussing a picture of a Roman emperor during the U.S. presidential election cycle could prompt a more wide-ranging discussion about the ways leadership is expressed through different time periods. First, docents would post their blog and elicit comments, making themselves available for the conversation, which would then be posted through Facebook and Twitter as well.

“It was really interesting because it’s a lot of work. A lot of work for the docents who weren’t used to writing in this format or not used to working in WordPress. It was something else they had to do. They had to go finish their tour and then come to the desk and see if there’s anyone commenting. Nobody commented on their blogs...or at least very, very few people. Facebook had a really, really great response, lots of great conversations, people asking probing questions and, you know, tried to prod people into having arguments. Twitter had similarly fun responses. And what we summarized was...this is how we explain this: The blog feels very much like the Getty’s website. So when you’re on the Getty blog it feels like you’re on our website. You’re reading a blog post and to write a comment on the Getty’s website feels like you’re writing on the Getty’s website. That’s so

intimidating. When you're on Facebook, you're on your own timeline, you're in your own space, talking to your own friends. And the Getty's content comes into your space and says, 'What do you think about this image of the president? And do you think that the ancient Romans were doing the same thing that Barack Obama is doing today?' And you see your friends commenting and other regular, old people like me, and the conversation flows a lot better in a venue like this. So that's sort of taught us a lot. The project ended up stopping because it was too much work. I think, the education department, the way they were running these blog posts started getting more prescriptive and defined and less and less open and participatory, and so [we] ended up kind of killing it" (Edwards, 2013).

Another prime example Edwards points to involves the Getty soliciting photographs from its visitors and public about their visits to the Getty campus. However, two immediate problems arose involving the lack of staff to maintain such a digital presence and the legal ramifications for blurring the boundaries between its own prerogatives and those allowed by using social media applications. "We've done that on Flickr. There's all these participatory things that we've thought about that we want to do, but we don't have the staff to do it. We have a Flickr group called 'My Getty Visit' where people can upload their photos when they come here, and we actually used several of those photos. We used them in our newsletters. There's one on our website. There's this image on the Trust section is a Flickr...oh, it got moved [pointing to the screen]. Oh, my god, never mind. There used to be an image here that was a Flickr photo from one of our visitors, but we have this problem. We have this legal problem that the Getty Images has the same name as the Getty, and there's



a legal battle between us and them over the use of this name. And Flickr has a relationship with Getty Images where anybody can make their images available for contract to use and get paid for it via Getty Images on Flickr. Well, so this is the problem for our legal department: We cannot be associated with making money off of other people's photos of our institution. So we had to pull it. We can no longer solicit images on Flickr. We don't take any new pictures anymore because of this legal problem. So there's a web of legal issues, of staffing issues, of psychological like readiness issues here that prevent us from doing all this whole-heartedly" (Edwards, 2013).

Another element to the decision-making process, beyond just how to tailor content to particular platforms, also involves deciding whether or not developing new technology applications is necessary for a particular project. Murtha Baca of the Getty Research Institute indicates that developing technological functions or applications are often limited by staff or other resource constraints by pointing to the rollout of their Research Portal. "We have a lot of grandiose things we'd like to do with the Portal. We would like to put more tools in the Portal, where scholars could build their own collections or annotate documents. It's just a matter of resources. The information systems department right now is building a more robust back end for the Portal so they don't have time to put all that other stuff on it" (Baca, 2013).

More specifically, though, the question arises as to which comes first, envisioning the technology that allows for a project or thinking of a project and then getting the technology to follow? This is a concern that senior Web writer/editor

Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department must consider all the time. “Well, personally I’m always asking, ‘Do we really need to make this a technology project? Does this really have to be in technology?’ Generally, that doesn’t always happen. We often hear from the top of the institution: ‘I need an app. Make me an app. Make it by...’ So the shiny object syndrome, it definitely happens here. That’s something that, as a person, as a group working, as a technology team, we have to sort of manage that. We have to manage up. We have to explain why that’s not always the best approach. We have to explain that sometimes that’s a set up for failure. We have to explain that it costs a lot of money. So we’re constantly, all of us, in the mode of asking, ‘Why are we doing this? What are the goals? What are we trying to accomplish?’” (Edwards, 2013).

In this way, privileging platforms requires thinking about which platform would be best, what are its limitations and possibilities, and also how it can be used and for what purpose. There are so many ways in which digital information can be propelled and interacted with through so many platforms and social media applications that it becomes equally necessary for heritage professionals and participants to consider what it is they are interested in sharing, with whom, and why. These choices play a significant role in privileging platforms for creating a platformed community of memory because connections are determined through who shares information with whom and in memory construction by what they do with it. In other words, when someone sees something they like and share it with a friend, then they in turn share it with a friend, then everyone who participates by commenting on it or sharing it becomes part of a platformed community of memory.

From Edwards' perspective, understanding how these connections works and knowing what to do with this process is increasingly a function of how cultural heritage institutions must position themselves in these networked conversations and interactions. "Yes, there are tools you can use to monitor and listen in to what other people are saying about you. We follow that. I think there's a little bit of uncertainty about how to enter that space and join them over there instead of making them come to us. Actually part of that initiative is the Getty Voices project, which was launched at the beginning of this year [2013]. I think this is the beginning of a first step towards engaging people individually. It's saying we are individual people at the institution, and we are going to talk to you about what we do and invite people to have conversations with that person because that person is going to be available on social media all week. You can talk to curator Beth on Facebook; you can ask her a question, talk to her personally if you want to. It's a stab. It's a beginning of trying to personalize the institution, I think" (Edwards, 2013).

Sometimes this does not always work as planned, however. Edwards refers to how decisions can be made in conjunction with curators about what looks good on the website and is representative of an idea they want to convey with an exhibit but even these comprehensive exhibition pages might still lack visitors. "There is a little bit of a 'Long Tail.' People still go to them, but it's not huge. And for most of them, there's a lot of viewing during the show. And once the show is gone, it just drops off into the nothingness. It's a lot of work that it didn't make sense to build out these huge exhibition presentations, which are kind of tantamount to recreating the whole exhibition online. Now their group is doing these single pages with a little bit

of text, big nice images, a selection of four five images. Boom. Done. So this is another example where we changed the approach” (Edwards, 2013).

There are other practical implications to maintaining a presence on these platforms, as cultural heritage professionals must also now consider what is being discussed in those realms and how best to direct their resources to monitoring these conversations. Part of this involves developing dedicated teams or staff who must devote their energies to the functions of these platforms and social media applications, as well as understand the varying complexities of participation when each platform has its own parameters and capacities. Thus, in privileging platforms, cultural heritage institutions must also reposition themselves less as stewards of collections and more as conduits, collaborators, and facilitators of an ongoing conversation in a networked social sphere.

According to Murtha Baca, the Getty Research Institute’s approach is to situate their activities and efforts where the conversations are most likely to happen, which she says increasingly is taking place on social media applications such as Facebook, but that also requires new levels of interaction and contextual knowledge for how to facilitate the social functions and shared experience of its communities within these participatory environments. So the GRI developed a Web publishing group that maintains high publication standards, edits every single word that goes on the website, produces Facebook posts, and works on the YouTube video channel. Through this dedicated team, the GRI can facilitate a dialogue among its community through social media applications such as Facebook that would not otherwise get circulated.

“The curator can’t be sitting there writing Facebook posts. They shouldn’t be wasting their time doing that when they have scholarly work to do. But it turns out [Facebook] has been a very good vehicle for the GRI...[so the Web publishing team] can decide, ‘Oh, the GRI just acquired some really cool thing.’ Then they contact the curator who’s the expert in that. They can ask them to write a very short posting and suggest a good image to put on Facebook, and then [the] team edits it so it’s Facebook-like language and style. It goes through a whole editorial process just like everything else and then they push it to Facebook. So that is a good way to also reach more people because Facebook —whether we like it or not— it’s something that a lot of people use. A lot of people look at Facebook more than they look up websites. So that’s a smart thing to have a group that pushes content to Facebook, and it helps us reach more people and make more people aware of some of the kinds of stuff that the GRI has which otherwise they would not know” (Baca, 2013).

For smaller institutions, such as the Prelinger Library and Archive, their limited staff and volunteer size inhibits their abilities to designate a dedicated staff to maintaining their digital presence and social media applications. In the case of the Prelinger Library and Archive, the task of privileging platforms falls mostly to co-founders Rick and Megan Prelinger. Though their digital platforms encourage commenting, appropriation, and repurposing, their social media output is primarily used for facilitating dialogue among its community of users rather than increasing access to items within their collection. The Prelingers may tweet about new objects in their archives or projects they’re working on, but their use of social media applications such as Twitter and Facebook is intended more to activate social

interaction and engagement as both individual and collective expressions. Their desire is to move beyond the traditional model of informing or broadcasting meaning and relies more heavily on the social construction of cultural meaning as users contribute more of their own perspectives, expectations, and content.

According to Rick Prelinger, what emerges from these exchanges is the realization that society is instantiating its own cultural agency as an extension of privileging platforms. Put another way, people are preferencing certain social media applications as a strategy to curate themselves and their own interests as a form of memory practice. “To be perfectly honest, it’s probably fair to say that we’re sufficiently exposed, that we try to tweet about ideas or discoveries. We don’t tweet content at the library. People will tweet that they’ve been here or here they’ll Instagram pictures. I see much less on the Flickr now, but the transactions seem much more person-to-person. It is such a memory practice, and this is one thing I hate to credit to Facebook people with any great discoveries, but one of the things — I think they’ve tried to take over with the timeline and their various articulations of the timeline — they’ve tried to become people’s personal digital archive. Evernote is trying to do that right now. They want to be the locker where you put stuff, but Facebook has taken on the task of ordering that. And one of the brilliant things that Facebook realizes is that our digitally enabled personal story lines that we create and curate are not just what we say and where we go and what we do, but it’s what we watch and what we listen to and that we produce our identity through consumption and they were brilliant to integrate all that together” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

What emerges from this line of thinking, then, is just what role cultural heritage institutions are playing when they privilege certain platforms and social media applications that change the cultural equation from the bottom up. In essence, when cultural heritage institutions privilege certain platforms and social media, and then their communities of interest privilege the platforms they prefer, suddenly what emerge are answers to questions that haven't even been asked. Cultural heritage institutions must now consider these ramifications, as they are no longer directing a line of thinking as much as they are reacting to what their communities of interest want to talk about as they privilege themselves, their own choices, and their own interests in what they want to remember.

Roger MacDonald of the Internet Archive notes that this privileging of platforms is indeed becoming a peer-to-peer enterprise, where participants are getting out of their social media use what they want, including new forms of collaboration and knowledge production, not just what the cultural institutions want to offer through the platforms they've privileged. "I think it's wonderful that we have the ability to enhance the potential to learn from others across a variety of platforms, like Twitter, where there can be this kind of scale effect, and there can be a community of residents...The way I use Twitter, I will occasionally find somebody who I had no idea existed and who's commented either on something I've created or that we're both interested in and it allows me to discover their new perspective and to reach out to them. The things that are most meaningful to me...I have a multitude of data streams in, a lot of filters looking for things I'm interested in and outliers about things I never knew or even knew I'd be interested in. The more I know about

disparate things, the more I can put seemingly disparate things together into identifying a trend or opportunity” (MacDonald, 2014).

Sandy Bond, a retiree and volunteer for the Willamette Heritage Center’s archives, shares this notion that social media applications can be used to satisfy personal preferences and activities. But she thinks if cultural heritage institutions utilize social media applications correctly then the prerogatives of both the institution and the user community can be met simultaneously. For instance, she may go on the center’s Facebook page to gather biographical information about people because of her interest in genealogy or get involved in a larger discussion about an issue or item the center has posted from its collection, meeting both her needs and those of the institution. In other words, her choice to use Facebook gives her the opportunity to find information she is looking for while at the same time the heritage center having a Facebook page allows it to promote its own activities and invite more participation from its users. “Facebook is a pretty natural tool for doing that. If I were to see an artifact that I knew something about, like the date, or asking who is in the picture, it would be a nice way to put it out there and gather information from the community. You might also start getting more people coming to the Facebook page to pique their interest” (Bond, 2013).

For the Willamette Heritage Center, which boasts approximately 16,000 visitors to its museum each year, having this Facebook presence is more than just increasing exposure. By privileging the platform of its social media applications, there is reciprocal interaction taking place that reiterates the center’s goals while allowing its community to privilege its own experience. “Facebook kind of does that



for us already. You can tag yourself at our site. And we have a Facebook presence so you can actually do that. I can go through and scroll through all these different pictures taken here, people taking wedding pictures, people just looking at the scenery, all that kind of stuff, which is really interesting...having people self-select and self-engage in that kind of activity” (Pine, 2013).

Heather Jovanelli, volunteer for the Prelinger Library, brings the discussion back full circle by saying that what is most important in privileging platforms is to achieve the necessary balance between what a platform can provide and what a user is hoping to accomplish by using it. Understanding this balance, she contends, makes it easier to know how to select the right platform for the right purpose as a memory practice. “I don’t have a Facebook account. One of the reasons I stopped using it was because I thought it was just too inundated with a lot of bric-a-brac and pollution, I guess you could call it. Instagram seems to me to be the most fun right now of the digital media forms because it is purely a visual picture, or I guess they also have videos now. But I think it’s going to go downhill because it’s getting so popular and they’re going to start posting adds on there. But for now, that seems to be the most fun and instantaneous way of making galleries. I think Instagram is more immediate. I think Tumblr allows for a more composite post. With Tumblr you can do a whole scroll of images, words, explanations, and links, whereas Instagram only lets you post a picture and a brief comment. You can’t post an html link in the comment section. I like Tumblr more for its composite aspects – you can write, you can post text, you can post photos, you can post links for a more complete posting. I’ve used Blogspot for more personal stuff too and I think that is a more formal way of

preserving things. But for me, it's also a way of processing the information or memories that I've gone through" (Jovanelli, 2014).

To summarize, there is a certain proactivity and reactivity to privileging platforms in digital heritage. Before we can begin to understand the various social practices for understanding how memory is shared in a digital landscape, it is necessary to recognize how and why heritage practitioners and participants choose certain digital platforms and social media applications. This includes how choices are made to adapt content and activities these platforms, as well as acknowledging that these choices influence the decisions and motivations of both cultural heritage institutions and participants in equal measure. These factors must be considered to better understand where, how, and why the digital practices are occurring that constitute new memory practices. This section shows that the process of privileging platforms requires a series of considerations and practices from both cultural heritage institutions and participants that must occur before we can examine the actual digital practices they allow. The next section sharpens the focus on specific forms of interaction that respondents to this study indicate are to them most noteworthy in memory formation.

### **PRIVILEGING PRACTICES**

If we are to consider our interactions and activities through digital heritage platforms as having some relation to memory processes, let us now reference the specific ways in which participants use these platforms and what such activity means to them. This connective turn allows us to draw correlations between

distinctive patterns of use and the discursive interpretations for why those practices invite the formation and sharing of memory in a digital landscape. What are the collective reminiscences we are sharing through our networked sociality and what are the connective tissues to our digital practices?

The digital practices that resonate most with Anja Foerschner of the Getty Research Institute are the annotating, commenting, sharing, and collaborating functions made capable by digital heritage platforms and social media applications. “I think one of the most important features or practices is definitely annotating/commenting. Which kind of represents other social media, like Facebook or Twitter, where also you put something out and you get a response, then you respond back, and you have this conversation. That is so important for art historians because art historians have what Murtha [Baca] calls ‘St. Augustine Syndrome,’ where they are used to being in their own space, working on their own projects, and not sharing so much. So I think that is something that is picked up very readily because you actually want to talk about your project, want to hear the feedback, or also the criticism. The other thing that I think will be most used, and most helpful, that has been going on for years already, is that you get information more readily. You can get articles, books, share bibliographies, you don’t have to go through this long, long process of getting every piece and bit that you need by yourself but you can collaborate on establishing something like a bibliography and then have people use it. Also, when images are available, that also makes things very easy, otherwise you have to travel to a museum to see it. But I think that more important is the annotation, the commenting, and the discussing” (Foerschner,

2013).

For Foerschner, then, it is the collaborative possibilities and activities of sharing knowledge that seem to hold the most promise for framing memory processes. The implicit activities of participants being able to contribute to the conversation or submit their own perspectives by sharing, commenting, annotating, or collaborating are interpretive exercises for how we remember that also have a democratizing function in digital heritage.

Anne Helmreich envisions the Getty Research Institute pushing more of its content out through their online and social media sources, adjusting to this new media environment as the field itself adjusts, but she finds that the most robust social media engagement in such conversations involves what participants find of most value to their own interests and pursuits. In other words, it may start with them finding a digital object they have an interest in and then lead to further participation that can range from 'liking' the object to engaging in further dialogue to developing their own alternative curation methods, depending on the capabilities of the platform.

"This is a visually oriented place so the people tend to respond to the images. So images tend to be the main thread or driver for the 'I like this'. We also get a number of peers who get involved in these things who are asking more technical kind of questions, like 'how do you do this?' or 'how did you make those choices?' I think the jpegs of artwork get more comments than videos. Time is a factor. You can ascertain an image quickly versus watching a three-minute video. You might want to take a look at the Clark in Williamstown, Mass. They've had a program where

they've put a lot of their collections online and then invite their users to create their own exhibitions and then they can propose them back to the institution. They've done at least two of those by now. These are exhibitions that aren't done by the curators but are done by the museum visitors through their online portal and they get translated into a bricks-and-mortar exhibition" (Helmreich, 2013). Giving users the agency to decide their own comfort level for how much they want to participate indicates that these platforms are offering users more performative choices than strict directives. This form of selective participation could, in essence, be equated to selective memory, offering participants the choice of how deeply they want to revisit an object from the past.

Francesca Albrezzi of the GRI considers the analysis of metrics another form of institutional memory that not only allows for an expression of data but also provides insight of user's past preferences and can affirm an institution's past decisions. For Albrezzi, this form of analysis is a social practice that is relevant to the memory-making process because it reveals how participants search for, find, and use digital heritage content. The metrics data indicates how effective cultural institutions are in enabling the sharing of those memories. By highlighting the analysis of metrics from the standpoint of institutional memory, from choices in cataloging to systems operability, she is in some ways referring to the old adage that those who don't understand history are doomed to repeat its mistakes. From her perspective, then, it is essential to consider how an institution evaluates its own digital practices so as to better understand how to generate knowledge for the future.

“We’ve had a deep Web project going on now for a while that’s more of an analysis that’s figuring out if people can get to the objects that they want here at the Getty. So there has been a review in terms of visitation to our site, accessing our collections, what are they getting to, what pages are they going to, and where do they get stopped. That’s really what we’ve looked at. So it’s not really looked at in terms of what is popular but how deep are they getting into our collections and where are they getting so frustrated that they just give up and they leave. It’s more about the effectiveness of our tools and our access points. The metrics report is used primarily as justification for keeping certain digital projects going. People see technology as being a silver bullet and the truth is you still need the personnel to operate these systems and to get this kind of work done”(Albrezzi, 2013).

Considering the analysis of metrics in this way, what has been traditionally thought of as a simple business practice or institutional assessment, could also now be reframed as a form of reconsidering previous choices, activities, or experience, which is basically just another way of saying, “remembering.”

Liz McDermott, managing editor of Web and communications of the GRI, sees a much more complex picture emerging from looking at the metrics and beyond. She argues that what is most revealing are the various behaviors and interests of participants clearly evidenced through instances of sharing, repurposing, and searching digital content. There are plenty examples of such far-reaching digital practice that she says illustrate patterns of behavior which go beyond just tracking statistics of usability or accessibility and are more indicative of how and what people want to remember.

One example of sharing and re-use came to McDermott's attention when a colleague noticed the main image on the Facebook homepage of a scholar from Italy was a print that the Getty had used two years before when they unveiled a downloadable wallpaper app. She recalls that the image had only been posted on the GRI website for about a month as a tile on a mosaic of images and here it was being commented on years later on someone else's Facebook page. "Well, I think, on the website, the main thing it's like getting back to user behavior...you want to give people something that they want. People on a website are like, 'I'll go here and read and see what's going on.' They're very focused on, 'I want to find what they have on the 18th century British art; I've got a paper to finish and I need to find this stuff.' So we're trying as much as we can to bring stuff up and offer people exactly what they're looking for. I don't think they're browsers as far as patterns of behavior. I don't think people are browsing too much. They're coming for something very specific, and then they're going to take it away and use it for something" (McDermott, 2013).

What McDermott finds so fascinating is not just what people are doing with this material but what can be revealed about their preferences. She found some of these activities by redesigning certain sections of their websites and by monitoring the corresponding metrics. Thus, in her own digital practice of repurposing their Web services and checking the metrics numbers, she began to see a variety of behavioral trends emerge. One of the most telling examples, she explains, came to her as she redeveloped the Collecting Provenance section of the GRI portal.

"We don't have any sort of crowdsourcing or interaction much back and

forth. We just present stuff, and they can take it and do whatever they want with it. And I don't really know what they do other than stuff I hear anecdotally, right? Or look at the metrics to see, 'Oh, a lot of people really are interested in provenance.' To me, that sounds really dry when I came here, but tons of people on there are working on research projects related to it. When you do the metrics, it's one of the most heavily trafficked sections of our website. So there's a huge audience out there of art historians who are using these databases to track provenance and use them probably in their scholarly research. And they would not have had access to this before these databases were online" (McDermott, 2013).

The goal of the Collecting Provenance section is to literally track the evolution of pieces of art, including who created it, who bought it, then who sold it, bought it and sold it, and so on, up to the present day. This tracing the provenance of pieces of art is a massive undertaking and is compiled through a number of databases that has been consolidated into a record of art from countries around the world. "So I think for art historians it's very exciting because then they can come and look and see patterns of behavior. They get very excited about it because it starts telling stories to them about patterns of buying and selling. That means what was happening in the culture, the kinds of paintings that were being bought and sold, why were they being bought and sold, how they influenced or changed the culture at that time period perhaps. So that's another case where the numbers start telling a story" (McDermott, 2013).

McDermott also found that not only was the information available through this database revealing for art historians and scholars, but it also began to add up



the preferences of the users themselves. The other story that unfolded involved what users were then doing with the information as they re-used and repurposed the content for their own purposes. For example, McDermott points to one researcher who asked several research questions and decided to put 230,000 records through big data charts and then presented his findings through a data visualization and network diagram with which viewers could digitally interact.

Another realization that dawned on McDermott as she was redesigning some of their publications sections, which include electronic publications, research journals, and other holistic books, was that a trend emerged about what content users were interacting with on their portal. “We were looking at the numbers to see where people are going, what they're clicking on and what they're not clicking on. Well, it turns out that, of the clicks/of the unique views, we get probably 85 percent of people click on this electronic publication. All that's on here are [sic] this narrow little range of books actually about metadata. There's a huge number of people going on there. We concluded that people like free stuff because the stuff that's on here is free to download under an electronic publication. But I don't know whether we're right or not. That's like trying to get the story behind the numbers” (McDermott, 2013).

Senior Web writer/editor Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust communications department sees multilayered interaction through their digital platforms that coalesces through studies of user preferences, greater possibilities of collaboration, and increasing participation with their game applications. Some of the ways that user preferences and public interest can be measured are through metrics reports,

usability studies, and a program of in-depth interviewing tactics and empathy exercises called 'design thinking,' which ascertains patterns of behavior, engagement, and motivations for the ways in which people interact with their digital platforms. Measuring patterns of digital behavior and interaction is an exercise that is useful for assessing platform effectiveness and usability, as well as analyzing user preferences and observing what people are choosing to remember.

Another potential for new memory practice is implied through expanded capabilities for collaborative activities. Edwards makes this correlation when she describes the Getty Scholars' Workspace platform as providing further opportunities to share experience and knowledge through digital collaboration. For Edwards, this project platform promises a lot of interpretive possibilities as scholars and the public can collaborate together online and create scholarship that renegotiates the recollection of cultural forms.

"[The Scholars' Workspace] really wants to capture the conversations of scholars talking to one another and opening that up to the public so people can see what scholarship is about and see that there isn't one right answer in art history and there's conversations that happen. So I think that's what that project is about, for me. There's multiple tools you can use for that so, depending on what the research project that the different scholars are working on, they may need to annotate text. They may need to annotate images. They may need to compare images. They may need to build a timeline. There's multiple modes that a scholarship can take, but the core thing is they're collaborating and they're doing it together" (Edwards, 2013).

However, Edwards asserts that the collaboration that occurs is not just

between those who use platforms such as the Scholars' Workspace. She indicates that even creating content for a Web page requires a collaborative approach that requires her to work with curators and educators, for example. Part of the thinking involved in this process is to consider the participatory capabilities. So an institutional activity when designing its own platforms must also entail trying to determine how users envision the process of searching and discovery. In essence, heritage institutions must develop collaborative strategies for and try to anticipate how people may want to recall digital content through their platforms.

“So there’s a moment where we sit down and we talk about what our goals are here, what we’re trying to accomplish, what is the message you want to get across, or what is it that you want your audience — they want some sort of participation, which happens sometimes like the game— what do you want the audience to do, what do you want the art experience to be. And we start from there. Once we get that agreed upon, sometimes actually usually whomever I’m working with has an idea of what kind of content they want to put in whatever it is we’re building in terms of works of art that they want or a story they want to tell or specific text they need to include. So it’s a lot of negotiations and back and forth” (Edwards, 2013).

How this collaborative planning has translated into what users want to interact with through their digital platforms has resulted in some unexpected insight for Edwards. “Well, one surprise, which is a continuous surprise, is that the games we built...we built these online games called Getty Games, and they’ve been up since 2006. And these are simple Flash games. This represents three percent of

traffic for our entire website. It's huge. Three games and a jigsaw puzzle, and this is huge. Three percent. And I think we have over 200,000 pages on our website. We have library resources that are looked up by people across the globe. We have more than a million visitors to our website every month, and three percent of that is going to play these games. So that's surprising and awesome. I don't think just kids are playing this. Plenty of adults are playing it, too" (Edwards, 2013). The implication is that heritage institutions must shift their thinking to accommodate public interest, in this case, for increasing gamification. They should also be developing comprehensive and collaborative strategies for leveraging digital practices through their digital platforms as a means to anticipate future memory recall.

Murtha Baca, head of digital art history access at the GRI, turns her attention to several digital practices that are being privileged by the capacities of the Getty's digital platforms, most notably repurposing as a result of a new open content policy; expert social tagging, annotating, and keyword functions through their Scholars' Workspace; and by providing unfettered access to its databases for a variety of uses, including broader translations and interpretations.

Baca sees the digital practice of repurposing as one of the most significant changes in the way people can interact with heritage collections. In the summer of 2013, the Getty announced a move toward an open content policy where it made several thousand high-resolution digital versions of museum objects available for public re-use. "At this moment you can go, you can right-click and download it and take it. You can have that digital copy and do whatever you want with it. You can make a t-shirt. You can publish it in a book. You can make a shower curtain. You can

do whatever you want” (Baca, 2013). Having the capability to turn objects of cultural production into digital keepsakes is another way for participants to revisit or remember their experiences with a heritage collection and share it in ways that are meaningful for them.

Baca indicates that another novel approach to re-using and repurposing content is not just for individual items within its digital collections but also for new methods of sharing entire data sets. Noting that the Getty is a conservative institution from a legal point of view, Baca makes it clear there are some materials from the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> centuries that cannot be provided with unfettered access because of copyright issues. However, she is seeing a move toward offering truly open content and open access to its databases and whole data sets for re-use and repurposing.

“Like our vocabulary databases...anybody in the world can go on the Web and look at these huge databases of vocabulary, like a huge electronic thesaurus. But if they wanted to get the data, they would have to cut and paste it individually. So we license the data, where organizations contact us and sometimes we’ll waive the licensing fee, and vendors also contact us, so we charge money for it. Not an exorbitant amount but we charge some money. And they can license the data, and they get the whole data set, and they can build it into an application or cataloging system or whatever they want to do. What we’re doing now is investing in this thing called ‘linked open data,’ which is in a very simplistic way, a way of expressing your data, very complicated, you put it out in the Cloud, and anybody can get it and do anything they want with it”(Baca, 2013).

Baca says other ways to expand the interpretation and meaning of digital collections occur with the special collections catalogers who provide catalog information, records, and descriptive metadata that aid in the search process. But, she argues, more voices involved in this process would only add to the narrative, interpretation, and meaning of their collections.

“Cataloging is one of our big issues because we can digitize until we're blue in the face, but if there's no catalog information on that, no one can find it, and we have a very small staff of Special Collections catalogers. We do have a Residential Scholars program where we, let's say over a course of an academic year, we have 60 people coming here to work with this stuff in our collections and if we had a social tagging application while they're looking at the stuff in Special Collections they could be adding tags. We should be exploring expert social tagging. This is one of the things that is the challenges of technology and the misunderstandings about technology is that because computer technology is so advanced now that everything should now be so easy, but it's not because some smart person would have to write the social tagging application and get it to interact with our library catalog or whatever other information system” (Baca, 2013). Unfortunately, she adds, the ambitious technical agenda of the Getty has its technical team maxed out in terms of resources and staffing for now, so it will likely be awhile before they can build features that will allow resident scholars to seamlessly add tags or other catalog information while doing their research at the Getty.

However, Baca points out that one place an array of interaction can and does take place is within its burgeoning Scholars Workspace, a digital platform still in

beta testing they have constructed for scholars to conduct research, collaborate, provide translations, annotate materials with additional information and interpretation, and increase access points to its Special Collections. Though it is not being designed for public consumption and use, it does allow for scholars from other cultural institutions to participate in digital practices that in turn expand the narrative, provide additional meaning, and share knowledge. According to Baca, this tool set will allow scholars to conduct research projects, publish their results, identify heritage artifacts, link information to the databases, and accommodate their scholarly conversation, including showing oppositional readings and divergent interpretations.

“Another thing I loved about this, and this is one of my areas of interest and skills, is we can also provide the translation. But, again, translation is an interpretation. So one of my other project researchers on this project is a skilled translator and she can go in and comment on my translation and say, ‘I would have used a different word for this.’ On a couple of occasions where she caught where I actually made a mistake, I went in and changed it. But in other cases, where she said I would have used a different word or I would say this a different way, I didn’t change it because I stand by the way I translated it, but I kept her suggestion to let people see it’s an interpretation and you can translate things in more than one way” (Baca, 2013).

Megan Prelinger, co-founder of the Prelinger Library, registers increasing awareness and privileging of such participatory digital practices as repurposing content, alternative curation activities, and other associative interactions taking

place in relation to her appropriation library and space. She argues that the potential for users to share and repurpose content is the hallmark of today's digital practices.

“Well, that's what we've always been about from the beginning...Most research libraries don't encourage you to photograph, copy, scan, and reuse anything for any purpose, and we do. We have since the beginning. So that hasn't really changed. What's changed is that, nine years ago, we were shockingly innovative, and we said that we wanted to do that; and now there are lots of other places that have similar remix, reuse practices. You know, it doesn't really affect our behavior towards our visitors. If they're going to make a scan and use it to make an artist book of which they make it edition ten or they use it for a website, it's the same to us, we are equally enthusiastic about both kinds of uses. And as long as people are appropriating materials — like whether or not they're being appropriated for a purpose that's going to be born digital or born craft — it doesn't really affect how we offer the materials. Our offer's platform-neutral in terms of what our visitors are going to do with it” (Prelinger, M., 2013).

What people have done with some of their materials has given Prelinger more than a few surprises, however. In one case, some agriculture activists took a government document tracking the movement of shipments of sheep around the country from 1938, turned it into a recruitment poster to recruit people into farming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and then sent thousands of PDF files around the country. Some of the Prelinger Library materials have been used to make music album cover artwork, research projects for museum exhibits, and even as 'Zines. “I mean, the



number of ways in which we've been used is almost beyond cataloging. I guess most surprising to me is people who used materials in the library to inspire like woodcuts and charcoal rubbings. It didn't really occur to me to think in those directions when offering material. You know, I was thinking of the Creative Commons model. You know, digitize/swap/spread/share, and so for somebody to go then make a woodcut charcoal rubbing...I'm sure there's a universe of things that have been made out in the world that we just don't know about" (Prelinger, M., 2013).

Prelinger also argues the capacity for people to add to the narrative, change the meaning or interpretation, or create their own versions is much like creating new associations or adding their own memories to the traces of a larger cultural mix. In this way, she enjoys seeing what people are thinking about, the ideas they come up with, and what they choose to do in relationship to the tangible record of things they keep in their archives and what they contribute to the Internet Archive. Prelinger finds it most interesting that much of what occurs in a digital context is a form of self-curation, of people choosing to contribute either their own materials, adding to collections through crowdsourcing, or interacting with digital content that is driven by their own interests. "Right, everybody can be their own curator, that's the trend in museums for people to be able to have digital versions of objects on their devices and to curate little sub-collections for themselves and share them with their friends" (Prelinger, M., 2013).

Another interesting element to this, she insists, is what is revealed through the participants' processes of discovery, which further exemplifies that sharing personal interests through what they take pictures of, post, and share with other

people should now also be considered a form of privileging practices. In other words, what they share about their discoveries through social media applications, such as Flickr, indicates a great deal about what people want to remember as cultural heritage by what they choose to privilege themselves.

“So if I go to Flickr and search Prelinger Library and everyone’s uploads, the thing is the pictures that are like seven years old come up at the top, but there are a lot of pictures. There are more people sharing about discoveries than sharing about us in particular. Yes, the process of discovery, I love it. This makes me happy when I see it. And text, you know, it’s images, but it’s not just images. It’s also... [everything] within a subset that we have worked very hard to create of the total available literature. So I actually see it as dialogic between our curatorial work and theirs. In addition to the fact that people will also make actual new media products. There’s another level beyond this kind of sharing that’s actual remaking appropriated re-use — so that not to be forgotten” (Prelinger, M., 2013).

This form of privileging also gets to the heart of shifting notions of curatorial authority, as discussed in the previous chapter. Participants being able to interact with a collection in a digital space, find something they like, share it, highlight their own experience, respond to others’ contributions, or create new materials are all representative of digital practices that are reshaping cultural heritage and memory formation. Some of the most common ways that Prelinger sees participants engaging through social media applications include commenting and sharing posts through Facebook or tweeting about their library visits.

Heather Jovanelli, a volunteer at the Prelinger Library who inventories their

periodicals and serials holdings, also created a Tumblr site based on scans and posts of material she found interesting. As a musician, Jovanelli found an entire collection of articles and imagery from *The Wire* magazine and turned it into a self-selected curated page. “So one thing about the Tumblr and Flickr, just to differentiate it and makes them especially great Tumblr and Flickr is because they’re not defined as publication. People put stuff up there that’s totally copyrighted because they’re just reporting about it, they’re sharing it, whereas when it comes at the level of appropriative reuse, like if somebody’s doing something commercial, they tend to steer clear of the more recent copyrighted materials. Heather [Jovanelli] can make a Tumblr about them because she’s all excited because she’s a musician. She’s a recording artist. She has a guitar and a record. She’s kind of missed *The Wire*, generationally. I don’t think she’s done this on any other posting. She posted her inventory of what we have so anybody who looks at her Tumblr can know exactly what we’ve got, which is hilarious to me, because most of her Tumblr posts have been like, ‘Hey, look at this’” (Prelinger, M., 2013).

According to Jovanelli, creating her own curated exhibit of magazine covers and images on Tumblr was a repurposing activity that she likened to going down a rabbit hole. “I would see what stood out to me or maybe caught my eye, something I’d rarely see in my daily comings and goings. I found so many...I don’t know, I turned over so many rocks and stuff, sometimes I’d find particular passages of writing that I found particularly appealing, or some alliteration that it had, or maybe some imagery that conjured up something in my imagination. Then I’d lift it and use it. I like visual stuff, like so many people, and I would scan anything that stood out to

me. Then I would upload it onto my computer and make a post out of it. What I was hoping to do was to just show the stuff that was interesting to me on that website. Usually it's whatever jumps out at me. I really like so many different things. I like space. I like painting. I like music. I like railroads. You know, regional police journals. There was one I found about silo construction, how to build a silo, it was an article about farming practices in Ohio. Whatever pulled me or I thought was kind of funny or unusual, I tried to bring life to it" (Jovanelli, 2014).

She describes numerous examples of repurposing from both analog and digital content that she digitally curated, language she appropriated from an astronomy book that became a song she wrote and performed, and imagery that she turned into watercolor paintings. All of these activities were then shared with a larger community through the social media applications of Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Tumblr. "There was one book there they had that was called *The History of the Last Billion Years* and it was only like  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick, which I loved. That was the title and I took a shot of that book sitting on a wooden table and you could read the title on its spine and I took a shot of that and put it up on Instagram. I've also put up some rare illustrations that were like a sign of the times from the 1950s and some astronomy images from that period. So, yeah, I guess I've put some of my discoveries up on Instagram from the Prelinger Library. It would be really interesting if people used that information to make either a fiction story or illustration from their own imaginations and use it for something like that. Or maybe have them write about their own experience they had that they didn't remember until they were provoked by the image" (Jovanelli, 2014).

So in addition to capturing her own interests by curating her own Web collection, Jovanelli thinks that the most memorable practices that are being privileged are sharing and repurposing. She says, in some cases, the capacity to share and repurpose digital content might pique someone else's interest or allow for a creative spark that others can respond to in whatever ways they see fit, whether by extending the dialogue through commenting or by contributing their own derivative versions.

From another standpoint of someone who has created a physical archive for the purposes of re-use and appropriation, Rick Prelinger has witnessed a shift in thinking over how people's motivations can be revealed through their choices. This includes choices from the standpoint of a heritage institution, which must decide the capabilities of the platforms they choose to use, how much access to provide, whether or not users should be able to comment, or if repurposing should be allowed. At the same time, how participants choose to interact with digital material and what they do with it also reveals their own inclinations.

"So you have to make sometimes choices based on externalities: How much money do we have to do this? Is there a way we can host material without going broke giving it away? You can go broke giving things away on the Internet because you get nailed for bandwidth costs. I don't like these either-or questions because if we think about the world we like to live in, it's not an either-or world at all, so I kind of imagine an ecosystem of access where...or a spectrum of access where the majority of access if you take, let's say...let's take home movies of the Oregon Country Fair in 1980. One spectrum of access is that you watch a degraded version

on YouTube. Another point on that spectrum line is that you watch it in context with a community of people who maybe are talking about it or are maybe involved, so that participant observer thing breaks down, and there's a tradition of passing on memory between generations between different parts of the community. Now there might be that you actually physically touch the material. You go on to the archives, and you look at the material on a viewer, blow-up frames or you're involved with repairing. But there are physical screens at the same time. All of these things can happen, and all these things should happen. When we orient ourselves towards the digital approach or towards an analog approach right now, a lot of times it's the question of temperament. It hasn't been really thought through. This is the problem with film, and it may be a problem with other media as well. Film people are cinephiles. They do what they do with film because they love film. They love movies. It's not logical....,we just keep on doing it because we think it's important. There's been a little more of a discourse about collecting print material. It was very little about digital material. The reason people digitize, put stuff online, in many cases it's out of anxiety or fear, or perhaps it's because they hope to monetize, or perhaps it's because they're administration if they work in an institution. Berkeley puts books online because they want to compete with Stanford who are doing Google Books. These motivations really haven't been worked out. You're hearing me kind of resist taking curatorial control of this, and it's largely because my whole experience in the last 20-30 years has been putting stuff out into the world to see if they'll come, to see what will happen, and finding that communities grow around the material and start to use the material in ways that I never could have imagined" (Prelinger, R.,

2013).

Some of the practices that do emerge in interacting with Prelinger's archive of amateur home movies and industrial films have not only surprised Prelinger, but also required him to question what people have chosen to do when he allows repurposing and commenting. In many cases, the actual interaction and spectrum of use by users defied his own intentions and expectations. "Originally, I thought, 'Okay, when we started putting stuff online at the end of 2000, it will be used in research and instruction.' It's used a lot in instruction at every level, and I know it's used in research because I see the Internet Archive cited all over the place. One of the mistakes that we've made or the Internet Archive has made is that there's one portal for the Prelinger collection, and the portal has a fan orientation. If you look at the annotations or the reviews that people post, it's like: Who's the foxiest actor or actress in the Prelinger film? Or they post near hate speech or actual hate speech about 'We were too easy on the Japs in World War II.' It's not a place where scholars and teachers participate" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

The orientation of participation, then, gets back to the heart of conflicting notions of curatorial authority and democratization presented in Chapter Four. Even though Prelinger is open to everybody being involved in the process, from interpretation to appropriative re-use, he says that once you make materials available to the public, the question of incorporating participation reframes the discourse about how to deal with populism and the direction of its activities. Though he would prefer to see more elevated discourse through commenting and discussions, overall he still supports and encourages increased engagement. For

instance, say regarding railroad films in his collection, Prelinger would like to see labor specialists join the conversation as much as he would love to see a historian of race and ethnicity talk about the difference between the African American steam engine, firemen, and the engineers. But where he finds the most diversity in thought and activity seems to be less in discussions through commenting or discussion boards and more through how people repurpose materials in his digital collection

“So there’s been a lot of not-so-memorable remixing, but of course that’s what you would expect. If you have 100 students writing papers, you don’t expect that all of them will be stellar. You hope that some of them will be. There’s been some wonderful remix works and very creative work. There’s been a lot of boring stuff. So sometimes people just pull a shot out where they use it as stock footage. So they’re looking for images to re-edit with. There’s a lot of that. And some of it is quite great. Some of it is sort of extrinsic to the original material itself. There’s this topical reassembly, this sorting type thing. The remixing artists, the McCoys, Kevin and Jennifer, do that a lot with film. They go through archival material, and they sort material out by topic” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

It is through this repurposing of materials that Prelinger finds some of the most memorable interaction with his collection, particularly a feature through the Internet Archive portal of the Prelinger Archive that allows for mashups of its amateur home movies and industrial films. “One of the things I like the most that just came out of this spring was...did you see ‘The Bonobo’? The Cirrus video made by a guy named Cyriak Harris. He took a really boring film called ‘American Thrift’ in our collection and made this really beautiful sort of kaleidoscopic piece with after-



effects, which is dopey and wonderful. But it's dopey to the point of being transcendent. It's really, really good. The first piece that was done with our collection I kind of liked was a feature film called 'Fed Up' done by Angelo Sacerdote. I think it's online now, and it was a documentary about the American food system. [It was about] young farmers who're obviously critical about the food industry and it was like 80 minutes of talking heads. It could be the kiss of death to watch that, but what he did was build these codas with material from our collection and that showed the industrial food system flourishing. And it's history. And so he was able to build up the context that these people were working to bring down. And it worked really nicely. I thought he did a great, great job" (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Another facet to this type of repurposing is that it can also lead to further interaction and cross-referencing through linking and sharing that connects people, content, and ideas in instantaneous and wide-ranging ways that were not possible before networked social platforms. Prelinger refers to the example of his *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* film series, which creates a multimodal platform and forum about people interested in the Motor City. In one episode, there is footage of members from this historically black fraternity Omega Psi Phi, who are mostly professionally successful and famous African American men having a conclave meeting in Detroit. Once this footage was put up online, within eight hours that footage was being referenced on the fraternity's own website. "So I thought that it was really kind of wonderful, and it was the Internet at its best. It was information finding somebody that would be interested in it, and the other way around, people pointing to it. And being able to point to it is kind of a point of pride. That was kind

of neat” (Prelinger, R., 2013).

Roger MacDonald of the Internet Archive indicates the most memorable activity through digital platforms comes from sharing content according to his own interests and enabling others to pursue their own diverse paths by identifying the resources to create their own presentations of the content he shares to best meet their own needs.

“I’m at war with myself as to how best to spend my energies in terms of the difference between identifying media of interest and adding my own interpretation layer as opposed to how much value I can have as a librarian to make collections identifiable, useful, or repurposable for others. In terms of my own activities, though, in terms of social network opportunities, sharing, repurposing, etc., I’m particularly interested in the prospects for the Mozilla Foundation Popcorn Javascript library – they’ve got this great tool that is not ready for primetime yet but they’ve made a lot of progress toward it – that allows a lot of people to match up media, tell stories, utilize a variety of library resources like the TV archive, without having to download the source and hold them in your own server environment. You can dynamically call those media in browsers or multimedia editing systems from across the Web and sequence them, add your own commentary, share other perspectives, share other media, and that is something that is pretty transformative. The greatest thing about it is, like the early days of the World Wide Web, where you could view the source, view the Web page, you can use Popcorn to view the source and build off the sources of others and adapt them to your own storytelling. You don’t have to download them. You can just make a dynamic call that sort of links to

the media and puts it in where you want it. You're creating this kind of rabbit hole that people can dive down into using maps, videos, or other types of media. Intellectual property rights concerns are alleviated because people are just using them, not downloading them. You can define in and out points. You can layer media on top of one another in a FinalCut sort of fashion. Once somebody has created all this and published it, you can mash up the media in your own kind of fashion" (MacDonald, 2014).

According to MacDonald, this deeper level of interaction through interpretive repurposing is far more impactful and memorable than a more transitory activity of simply 'liking' something. "I think 'likes' are bullshit. They're meaningless for those who click them for something they 'like' and are absolutely meaningless for someone who gets the metrics on content that is 'liked.' It's a complete house of cards. What I find most memorable...I am a terminally curious guy and I love learning new things. I love finding things that I thought were true are not. So it's very striking to me when I have my mind changed that way from new information" (MacDonald, 2014).

It seems to MacDonald that there is a certain investment in not only seeking out information but also then having the ability to connect that information with other artifacts, content, or ideas that lead to additional forms, dialogue, and previously unforeseen connections. To him, it is this investment in interaction that produces the most memorable results. "I have diverse interests and there's this almost magical convergence that sometimes occurs between a neuroscience trend and a trend in hydrology and an interesting sociopolitical event, where a pattern

emerges that makes sense to me. So it's not just about connecting with others. It's about connecting knowledge. I will share it with someone else and ask them what they think about it. Do you want to work on this together or start another project? I might ask them where else to reach out to find others or find out more about this. Then pursue that opportunity. I'm looking for opportunities to advance the leverage points to see if there's potential to raise attention or money, or to apply organizational structures to do something about it" (MacDonald, 2014).

To connect the dots, MacDonald traces the process of searching for information, sharing that information, creating new links or conversations around that information, and then producing new products, ventures, or collaborations to address the meaning of that information. "Yeah, I don't do much shotgun sharing. When I go about actively sharing stuff it's more because I think my nose is twitching and I think there's someone who knows something on which we can work together. I have two territorial processes. One, like my Twitter process, I bookmark things that I think are important and the other is much more active. Where I'll seek out other people to collaborate. That's what I do with the stuff I discover" (MacDonald, 2014).

As director of the television archive of the Internet Archive, MacDonald also directs his efforts to developing new ways for those interactions to take place by capitalizing on the capabilities of digital platforms used by memory institutions such as his own. In doing so, MacDonald has found ways to repurpose the searching process itself and provided new platformed venues for analyzing and sharing digital content as a privileged practice.

“My coordinated team of engineers and others are continuing to collect television and opening up a segment of the television archive for public search. We have opened up the last four and half years of US television news, pretty much all national news and the local news from the San Francisco Bay Area and Washington D.C. metropolitan area. We’ve repurposed closed captioning to facilitate deep search within this research library context. When people use our public interface, they can search, compare, contrast, quote and even borrow television news. Our television news research service stands on the shoulders of Vanderbilt University’s television news archive. For 40 plus years, they have been recording signature evening programs from what used to be the three dominant networks in the United States and they’ve expanded those to include Fox and CNN. Researchers far and wide have used that library to great effect and we’re seeing what we can do to make that kind of library more conducive, more contextual and more deeply searchable. We’re trying to make television more ‘referencable.’ You know, it’s the most pervasive and persuasive media, but there’s been no kind of pause or rewind button of that experience. But media literacy in general and specific, nobody’s been able to really get a handle on it in order to ask the questions large and small, to understand how this media works to hold accountable those who are quoted in the media, as well as those who are creating the news and distributing the news. In addition to serving public researchers through our online interface, we are also looking at how we can support big data sets of television. To that end, we have been working with a number of scholars who are interested in looking at our entire corpus of closed captioning, and imagery, and other mediated elements of our archive. In this digital

era, where information is so easily, inadvertently capable of traveling outside what was intended, as digital librarians at the Internet Archive we are also responsible custodians of content created by others. So we are permitting researchers to conduct their big data research on our servers, in a virtual server environment, so that we don't have to give out all the media and its metadata for them to do their research on. Rather, they can come into our virtual reading room, conduct their research, and exit only with their search results. So we're looking at not only serving big data research on our archives but we're looking to promulgate this model for libraries that can be virtual reading rooms or do big data queries. This could open up an enormous amount of new content for discovery and analysis, while giving comfort to those who've created the content and distributed the content about how the value of their content in the library context will not be diminished" (MacDonald, 2014).

The development of this virtual library reading room and server environment has garnered the attention of researchers who are looking for new ways to analyze data and offers a host of new opportunities for ways in which this information can be repurposed. For instance, researchers could do a deep search of closed captioning for television news to analyze how global climate change or global warming issues are addressed, as well as what kind of language is being used on the news networks over time. In another example, a researcher wanted to analyze the archives particularly in the context of how geography was referenced in the U.S. news. After a query of nearly half a million hours of U.S. television news, looking at particular place names mentioned, he was able to leverage the process by creating a

dynamic, modifiable visualization of place name mentions every day so that a viewer could see where in the world the U.S. news referred to for the last four and half years. This was done on the virtual server through a basic search of place names but it was also leveraged against a search of the words through natural language processing of words around the captioning to disambiguate the place names mentioned. This provided context, such as making clear the difference between Lincoln, Neb., and Lincoln the president. Through a pass of these millions of words, he was able to map by day over the last four and half years where the U.S. news was focusing on in the world.

“The Internet Archive continually crawls the Web. We have 376 billion Web assets, mostly pages, indexed on the Web. In doing so, we also crawl and preserve a variety of associated documents that are in those pages. The researcher could then pull all those associated documents into our virtual server environment to look for issues and mentions of places...to see what kind of information we have and make a library index that is full-text searchable across its whole corpus. He discovered 1.6 billion PDFs that we have. [So in some cases] researchers [are] looking at a couple billion of our digital books. Some are interested in looking at the words in the book, but one was interested in finding the images in the books and capturing the words around the pictures in the books - not just the captions but the sentences and words around those images - and creating an index, like a separate library, to allow him to deal with visual features through the whole corpus that researchers could run algorithm searches for years to come” (MacDonald, 2014). So in addition to repurposing information into dynamic data visualizations, the search process itself

is also being repurposed through algorithms and the referencable data found in digital content.

Stefano Boni, lead volunteer for the Prelinger film archive with a background in film studies, also finds more memorable interaction through his own preservation work that results in the digitization of the Prelinger collection and his personal attempts to repurpose content found from amateur movie footage. Boni explains that as an undergraduate he worked on a project where he contrasted older, picturesque footage of San Francisco from the 1950s with grimier scenes of modern San Francisco in the Tenderloin and downtown districts. What he found through editing this footage was that he was able to compare the past and the present in a mediated juxtaposition that he found fascinating, surprising, and revealing. Boni further explained that observing the changes to San Francisco through this repurposed filmic representation was like bringing a memory to life, reminding him of the differences he had witnessed himself during his lifetime.

Boni also gains valuable insight and adds to the interpretation from his cataloging and preservation work of analog films that are to be digitized from the Prelinger collection for the Internet Archive. "Well, I don't digitize them, but they get digitized here. So this project here is essentially prepping the films, inspecting the films. Volunteers make repairs and log the information that gets cataloged into the database, like the content information, the technical information because a lot of this stuff has no information whatsoever. So we're either trying to date the film based on the codes...these little edge codes that Kodak had that give us a sense of when the film was shot. Or maybe there's mention of a Richmond camera shop and



no other information, which may give us a clue that it was probably filmed in Virginia, maybe. So we're doing a little kind of archaeological type of research. You know, try to put the pieces together and figure out where this stuff came from if there isn't any information at all" (Boni, 2013).

By providing context, such as explanations of origin and interpretation of content, Boni and his fellow volunteers are also classifying a system of meaning to the analog film artifacts that will then be made available digitally for appropriation and repurposing through the Internet Archive. This practice, he affirms, is in itself trying to track the memory of an object that will be revised as it continues to be digitally revisited and repurposed through a variety of platforms. Just like in the 'game of telephone,' he is initiating a conversation of meaning and has no idea where it will end up, but he understands that he will be sharing the experience with all those who become involved with the digital artifact as they view, comment on, repurpose, or share that content.

One such participant is Suzanne Levine, a photographer and media specialist for the disability community, who attended the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* film screening in December 2013. While Levine admits to not being overly active online, mostly because of the time involved wading through what she describes as "the junk" while looking for useful information she is seeking, she concedes that her primary practice is to share digital content. "So if I see something I'm interested in I will definitely share it. I know people who are archiving articles and I will definitely forward them on. I will find things that are more interesting to me...as I'm more visually based, it's usually images, film, or video, as opposed to long articles. I'll pass

on a link to things. Sometimes I'll 'like' stuff but more often than not I'll copy a link of stuff I like and pass it on or post a link on my Facebook page. I rarely make any kind of extensive comment. I'll never give in-depth analysis, as I'm not as print-oriented with words as I am for the images" (Levine, 2014).

However, given the sensitive nature of her photography in the disability community, she is not as willing to share some of her images or necessarily have them available for re-use in the digital environment, at least not without some say in how they can be used. "There's an issue of control for how images are used. I wouldn't want people to repurpose them but maybe comment or provide insight on them. But it is so sensitive when you are taking photos of people with disabilities. You may take a photo and see a person who is healthy and happy and being strong and you are trying to communicate something positive. Another person may see it and think, 'oh look at that poor person,' and in the way they use it or see it perpetuate certain stereotypes that we are trying to defy. In my photographs, I made certain promises about how my imagery would be used and not used. I never did stock photography. It was completely impossible to control and that's why people trust me to photograph them. If it were to go into some type of library or archive, which is something I'd kind of like to see, then there would be some kind of control for how it would be re-used. Then I'd be okay with that. But it is part of our history and should be documented and shared" (Levine, 2014).

As an advocate for the causes of the disability community, Levine is interested in seeing the dialogue expanded so that more voices can be heard on a variety of subjects. So she has contributed materials through a variety of platforms

and media forms, including content on Facebook, informational videos, and even educational curricula, and she wants to see more dynamic cultural heritage content that can capture a broader narrative, advocate for the disability community, and trace their underrepresented heritage. She even recently created her own Pinterest page, which she hopes to link to certain publications, journals, and other resources that may help her curate more of the information that she says often gets overlooked in traditional cultural heritage institutions.

Kylie Pine, archivist for the Willamette Heritage Center and former graduate student of *The Participatory Museum* author Nina Simon, asserts that some of the memorable practices and interactions being privileged through her digital platforms and social media applications involve the subtle differences between casual browsing and directed searching, as well as the sharing of knowledge through collaboration and informational requests. All of which, she notes, points to a certain investment in how participants want to engage with the center's collection. Taking her cue from Simon (2010), who argued there are varying levels of engagement and classes of users when museums reach out to their audiences through social media platforms, Pine has also struggled with how to invite more participation from users with her own digital heritage platforms.

"We have the people that just rush through and just want to look at stuff, browse. We have people that really want to read every single thing. So I think there are definitely different types of users and I have not developed a good strategy for how to use these types of social media aspects to get the ideal results for all these different users. I think there are ways we could target our audiences a little bit more

and maybe target, to see what is more interesting for these people that really want to participate. We're not getting random people off the street participating. I mean, it's the genealogists that's looking for their family history, that's looking for something on this one individual and they do a Google search and our site comes up. I do have some people that do follow our blog, which I get excited about. I've also got tangential and anecdotal information from one of my volunteers [about our Facebook page]. She's like, 'Thank you for starting to post photos and artifact pictures on Facebook. I really like just browsing it.' [Using social media is] not something I've been doing a lot of so I started doing more of it because I got that one feedback from her. And it means that more people are seeing it, too, if I understand that right" (Pine, 2013).

Pine also notices the interesting dynamic that as more people become aware through their searching activities of the center's digital presence, this initial interaction tends to lend itself to further opportunities for more pointed collaboration with genealogists, heritage professionals, and community historians. In some cases, users refer to the Willamette Heritage Center as an expert source of information, while others will create a network of links that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and research. As a result, Pine argues that because the center has a backlog of 50 years of information sitting in boxes to be preserved, a more deliberate attempt must be made to use their digital platforms and social media applications to foster accessibility of records and increase interaction.

"Long-term goal, I would really like to put all of our collections online and have a searchable database. People can know what's here, and we can get this stuff

out there. But I look at the startup cost of that, the cost of my time, and I'm thinking we're five to 10 years out, minimum. We don't even have an inventory of what's here yet. So the blog became an opportunity to bridge that gap and to bridge that need in our own facility. I can put up little bits and pieces, and it's still getting out there, and one or two years down the road someone's going to call me about this letter and want to look at it, which is great. So it's almost a bridge for us between getting to the point where we're completely searchable in a digital manner. I mean, we'll never have everything digitized up on the Internet, but at least we'll have what the guys call a finding aid of stuff so people know where to get the information. That's the number-one issue that we run into is: Yeah, these records might exist, but you have to know enough about the systems in place to be able to figure out who to ask to get the right information, to get your question answered. We get maybe 20 to 30 people emailing —well, it's more than that...probably 50 to 60 research requests a month with people asking questions about relatives, about their house, about other things. So there needs to be a big web of understanding and a filter for where information is, what is good information, and what is bad information. So we can use our blog, our website, and our Facebook page to answer some of those questions once and connect all of our resources with our community of users" (Pine, 2013).

Pine also posts certain materials as her own memory practice, which then sometimes becomes a shared experience. One example of this was a blog post about an advertisement regarding reproductions of a flower map of the United States that was created by a candy company. The item had nothing to do with their collection per se, but she posted the image on her blog as a reminder of something she wanted

to remember and it became one of the most visited posts on her site. While she cannot explain the reasons for that particular post's popularity, she does like the idea that access to her digital collection can both get information to the public and let them figure out if they want to engage with the site or even visit the tangible objects.

Pine also thinks the level of engagement that is produced through digital practice has a significant impact on how memorable an activity would seem. In other words, the deeper the engagement in the activity the more memorable it will be. "I guess I see them as different levels. So when we train our docents, we ask them to ask questions that lead from descriptive things up to asking people to think more about their lives and how these things affect them. In some ways, the different things that you said there kind of follow the same scope. Putting a like on something is more...I guess maybe there is more interaction there when I think about it more philosophically. But it's safe. You can put a like on something and...not think about it, yeah. But there's a little bit of a spark there, something in there triggered me to do that. If you share it with someone else, that's almost like the next step...that 'Oh yeah, this person would like this thing.' So I'm thinking outside. I'm actively manipulating in my mental capacity something there, and it's making a connection to me there. And I think the third level would be actually having a comment or having a discussion about it and really thinking about something and having an active discussion on it. Takes you out of that comfort zone area. You become engaged. So in some ways, what we're doing in a non-technical manner also fits with the digital and the new technology things there so I guess the highest potential for creating a

new cultural experience or a collective memory about something would be when we're talking about people and we're collecting their experiences and creating a broader understanding of an object, a photograph, a situation type thing. The commenting one would be for me more useful" (Pine, 2013).

Willamette Heritage Center volunteer Sandy Bond, who initially got involved with the organization because of her interest in genealogy research, has submitted some of her own artifacts to the archive collection, including a series of postcards she inherited related to Salem, Ore., as a way to build community heritage and memory. "I really appreciated some of the things I've archived. It is surprising to me how things have been used by members of the community so quickly. It is great how accessible it has become and how it is used by people" (Bond, 2013). While her own interests involve looking for news stories and pictures that help provide more biographical information for her own genealogical research, she feels that the cataloging activities through an application called Past Perfect help to provide additional information for objects that are scanned and digitized. Bond hopes at some point all of this information will be searchable by name, business, building, or whatever topic, that would further the identifying information, categories, keywords, and types of indexing needed for searching purposes. In this way, she envisions the potential for the public to eventually be able to add to the discussion, interpretation, or conclusions about certain parts of the collection as another function of these annotating, keyword, or tagging capabilities.

During one archiving project, Bond took a photo album of a family who had three children with tuberculosis, scanned its images before the book itself crumbled

apart, and posted it on the Willamette Heritage Center blog. Several articles and a lot of community interest were generated from the post, which allowed for a lot more interpretation and discussion about an item that had very little provenance information and could not speak for itself. Bond also appreciates the fact that social media applications, such as their Facebook page, allow the community to participate in the heritage center's functions, collections, and exhibits, even if they are not physically present to experience them or be a part of the conversation firsthand. "I actually looked at the Facebook page today. Someone had commented on their experience and posted some of their pictures from a recent fundraiser and someone did comment on that. So, yeah, there is some interaction on the Facebook page for those who are involved. They had an Oregon Trail event a few weeks ago, and during that event, throughout, they were posting pictures of various things that were happening at the event, and you knew that you didn't have to be at the event to see what was going on. That's what they did with their Fall fundraiser. They posted a few pictures during the event so that people could see what was going on" (Bond, 2013).

What becomes obvious from all of these discursive interpretations is that more practices are being privileged on the side of cultural heritage institutions and their professionals as well as on the side of participants. Activities that include searching, posting, digital curation, commenting, tagging, sharing, and repurposing are all constitutive of the realm of new possibilities for participation through multimodal heritage platforms and social media applications, which lend themselves to the formation of new memory practice and platformed communities



of memory.

### **PRIVILEGING PARTICIPATION**

Considering that certain multimodal platforms and digital practices are being privileged as heritage professionals and participants interact with content and each other in ways that make sharing memories easier across the new media landscape, more attention must be directed toward how these platforms and practices are also inviting new considerations of participation. Is there evidence to show that these new modes of interaction are in fact resulting in increased engagement, broader interpretation, or new forms of contribution?

While the possibility for more widespread participation exists through multimodal platforms that does not necessarily mean that collections policies will suddenly now have to adjust to privileging the public's materials or even their interests. Yet, cultural heritage institutions must think about what participation means in this new environment, how it should be addressed, and what direction it should take. One line of thinking is that curators' decisions about what to show, how to interpret an object, or what level of participation should be encouraged will be influenced by how many "likes" or views a particular object gets, or by a certain thread of discussion in a forum generated by the public. This could also change what is being exhibited or the collection itself to find more material based on mass appeal exhibited through digital platforms or social media activity.

According to Anja Foerschner, assistant to GRI director Tomas Gaehtgens, these are questions that have not yet been resolved. "That is an interesting question

but I cannot answer it because I'm not too deeply involved in the collection policy and I'm not too involved in the feedback features. I follow our websites and the Facebook page. If we get a new acquisition and we put it out there, of course, we get comments or "likes" or something gets re-tweeted...I mean, I could imagine, I think the core policy for collecting will not change for institutions because they've pursued a particular collection policy for a reason for awhile, but if they get input from people about certain objects or certain artifacts it somehow will, and I can't define the way, but it somehow will stick. And, thus, maybe it would influence their decision" (Foerschner, 2013).

However, Foerschner is quick to point out that such changes in participation are not a one-size-fits-all proposition nor do they necessarily apply across the board to every institution. For instance, she draws a distinction between the archives of the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Museum as having different missions and different participants, which shows that not all things are equal when considering how to privilege participation through digital platforms and social media applications.

"I think there is a little bit of a difference between our research institute and the museum because the people we address are mainly scholars. We do have exhibitions once in a while but they never have this mass appeal because they come from our archives and there are documents, nothing that you can go easily and get access to and look at and walk out. There is always a little work involved and an interest you have to have for a topic. So maybe that is a little bit about our collection policy – that we have scholars in mind. We have people in mind that really want to

work with those archives, going through those painstaking processes of really reading every page of a diary of one out of ten that is in our archive. But then museums, I think you are totally right with that, that museums have a stronger interaction with the public. They have art education and they have people that can actually report on the public's reaction to an exhibition and they get probably more direct response on Facebook or on Twitter. I do think that they will more directly be influenced by the responses they get" (Foerschner, 2013).

When prompted further, though, she concedes that even the Getty Research Institute might increasingly come under the influence of "likes" on Facebook posts or other forms of annotating and commenting if scholars use these participatory activities as measures to indicate what they want to privilege in their own research. In this way, the GRI might elect to highlight certain items on Web pages or focus its *Iris* blog posts based on what these scholars are saying they want by their social media activity. In essence, there is a certain reactivity to what an institution such as the GRI does that is influenced by the transparency and dialogue that comes from these digital applications that wouldn't have been there before.

"As I said, I was a little skeptical at the beginning about these media applications in relation to art history or to art, but I mean this barrier between art and social media is almost gone. Because artists just embraced the opportunity to get out and communicate. These media are, to a certain point, our cultural heritage right now. It's not that these media forms are the only presentation or conversation about these objects taking place but it's the form of communication that is evolving that represents our current culture. That is something that I find very interesting. To

a certain extent, and on the one side, cultural heritage is being played out in it with disseminating knowledge and talking about things and creating a dialogue, but on the other hand, it is cultural heritage itself. I don't know but a couple of generations from now [laughs] it will be regarded as what defined us and this generation or these generations" (Foerschner, 2013).

Anne Helmreich of the Getty Foundation discusses a similar trend toward increased participation but is more pointed in that she sees more connections occurring between cultural heritage institutions and the implications for what digital technologies mean for collaboration and sharing knowledge. "I think that one of the things we are all getting very excited about are the opportunities that are being created by linked open data. So it will be easier for museums to bring together objects that were once together but have now ended up in different collections. That would be a great way to make connections between different institutions that house objects. And I think a lot of scholars in art history and cultural heritage are looking [at] tools and techniques of the digital humanities and how they might transform research. In my own research, I've been using social network analysis to think about how that helps me understand the patterns and the significance in the historic art market. I know my colleagues in conservation are really interested in how they might use the tools, I mean they obviously are already using digital technologies, because a lot of their tools and techniques come out of the hard sciences, so all these imaging things have now become digitized, so x-rays are now digitized, but they're also interested in tools and techniques that can look for patterns within their data to find algorithms and do computational analyses as they search through a vast

number of paintings to find patterns” (Helmreich, 2013).

One example she refers to involves a researcher who did a project that used computational technologies and techniques to ascertain the thread count for canvases, which can help date a work of art or determine whether several paintings came from the same bolt of cloth. Helmreich says this prime example of bringing scholars and institutions together through technology has broad potential because it helps conservators in their treatment analysis and, depending on the thread count, will dictate how a painting should be cared for in the future.

According to Helmreich, this approach of applying personal interest to broader institutional participation also has implications for how social media feeds or comment sections should also be treated because they are key indicators of how heritage professionals, researchers, and the public can build connections between content and their own experience. However, she says, there may be limits as to what role cultural heritage institutions take in privileging participation, such as letting users upload their own materials or manipulate a photo collection, when similar functions already exist through social media applications. “You could just do a search and aggregate through Flickr. Again, we have to think of the pragmatic. How much does the institution want to take on if there’s already other media platforms that can aggregate images, what is to the institution’s advantage to collect that?” (Helmreich, 2013).

What emerges in this discussion, then, is an interesting demarcation where social media applications such as Flickr or Pinterest become some sort of cultural heritage based on what the public wants to highlight or keep versus the collections

selected by traditional museums or cultural heritage institutions. This distinction is not lost on Helmreich, but she insists there can be both curatorial authority and participatory elements that maintain relevance for both levels of interaction.

“I think it’s those in between spaces, where institutions are contributing and individuals are contributing, it’s in those spaces where we see more of the mix. The difference is that they’re uncurated spaces. I mean, you can curate yourself but at the core they are uncurated spaces, there’s no threshold, there’s no barrier to contributing. But I think the point of an institution like the Getty or other cultural heritage institutions is that you’re having a curated experience, where somebody has made selections. I think that’s the whole point of the museum or the library is that somebody has made those choices and why they’ve chosen to keep or display an object is about explaining those choices to the public. So I think it’s the act of curation that is critical to these institutions...[At the same time] I think that everyone is curating their own experience, right? People are choosing to show themselves by saying here are my meals, for instance, but they are doing it for themselves, they’re not doing it for the institutional perspective. Personally, I think it’s more like people are moving in the direction of museums. I think they want to have the kind of function of a museum. I want to house my memories, I want to display my memories, and I want to interpret my memories. People are moving closer to the museums not the other way around. If you look at the use of the word ‘curation’ it was used only in the preserve of the museum or library world and now it’s ubiquitous across the social media. Everybody wants to say, ‘I’m curating’” (Helmreich, 2013).

According to Francesca Albrezzi of the GRI's Digital Art History Access department, while these narratives are changing to allow for more points of view and have opened up to broader interpretations with everyone recording everything on their cell phones or commenting on everything that is posted, some constraints are still being exerted on this privileged participation. Albrezzi reinforces this position by saying that even with ample opportunities for participation through a variety of multimodal platforms and social media applications, there are still decisions being made and direct actions taken to put limits on what seems to be unfettered participation.

“We do allow comments, I believe, and we also have the Getty Voices blog on the digital magazine, *The Iris*, which comes out of the Web group and communications to pull from all the institutions here on this campus, as well as the Villa, to report on the work going on around the campuses. There is a comment section there. However, all the comments get reviewed through communications before it gets posted. People do respond and discuss different posts about different objects as they are brought up. So, again, as much as I'd like to hope that these multiple narratives are going to be able to break through and survive through different social media...Even in terms of our Facebook and our YouTube channels here, they're still heavily monitored. I do think there is a kind of policing” (Albrezzi, 2013).

Even as she argues that cultural heritage institutions remain as gatekeepers in some ways, though, Albrezzi does find that levels of participation are emerging that are opening those gates a little bit wider. The participation that is being

privileged may not just come from letting more people into the gated community, so to speak, but more from how certain forms of collaboration are reshaping the heritage process itself to have a broader base for how technology can be used.

“What we have found thus far, I mean each of these projects are focused on single objects, but the conversation in the Workspace is often around the collaboration between the technologists and practicing humanists. The discussion is usually around what it is you want to do digitally to get to something that is a new question or a new way of doing research, something that couldn’t be answered by traditional means. What is that research goal and envisioning how to solidify that, which helps build the technology around it and the tool set. That’s where a lot of our discussions have been around and it’s an ongoing process” (Albrezzi, 2013).

According to Liz McDermott, managing editor of Web and communications of the GRI, as things become more accessible digitally with the various platforms and social media, what is most difficult is trying to trace the interactivity to better understand how people are rethinking their behavioral processes and what they’re doing with this newfound promise of participation. “I think they're changing it radically in ways people can't predict yet because, I'm sure you've heard it from other people, but traditionally the curator takes the physical object and puts it in a physical room and people come and they look at them and read what the curator had to say. So now we might take the one object from that room and write ten different kinds of things about it on Facebook, and then someone on Facebook might take that and get inspired and pass it on and repurpose it, strip it down and redo it in ways we don't even know yet. I mean, it's pretty fascinating. I'm trying to follow



the trail. There are starting to get to be these apps where you can follow the conversation, but that's like almost a whole other department of people to track on that. But once you put it out in the universe, it's fascinating to see where it goes. Sometimes it goes into unexpected places...it shows up in unexpected places” (McDermott, 2013).

Attempting to surmise the trajectory of interest for how people want to interact requires McDermott to look both within and outside the GRI to understand the institutional and public reasons for participation. “We post about a lot of things for a variety of reasons. There's some things I'll post about that I don't think will get a lot of hits but I know that institutionally people will want me to post about. So putting that stuff aside, the two main things people want to know about is: (1) stuff that's going to advance their career in like the most basic level. So that's like a simple post where there's like all this stuff is free on Jay's door or a deadline is coming up for grant where you can get a lot of money to come here. That'll get everyone looking at it and get tons of shares. Then the second thing is pretty much anything we share that is an object from one of our archives. It's really fun to do, and it's so easy. You literally just pick anything out. We have so much here and write about it. People like it. They will just share it. We don't have a lot of commenters on our Facebook platform, which I kind of have a theory about. But we get a lot of ‘likes,’ and we'll get a fair amount of shares. And they're commenting and adding to their tile page” (McDermott, 2013). What McDermott alludes to here is that it is insufficient to simply consider what opportunities there are for participation without also considering what indicates reasons or motivations for participation.

According to Susan Edwards of the Getty Trust, understanding these motivations can then also promote engagement, awareness, and increase participation based on individual interest. Edwards refers to several initiatives that gained traction for their participatory elements, one involving the mobile game apps and another was an exhibition of found photographs called “Close to Home,” where the Getty invited its audience online to submit their photos and say something about them. “That’s the point of the institution is to raise awareness about the arts. But like the game, for example, that isn’t just about access; it’s about giving someone a good experience when they come here. And one of the things we found after we built the game was it was actually helping families have something to do. So parents come and they have two kids and they’re like, ‘Where do I start?’ This gives them a place to start. It gives them a path here: Go here first. Do this now. Do this. And it orients them to space, and it makes them feel more comfortable. It’s about giving them access by making them feel comfortable” (Edwards, 2013).

Another example that seemed to strike a chord with the audience was an exhibit of Russian icons from Sinai. The Getty had religious visitors from every walk of life, including Buddhist monks, Muslims, and Christians, participating in the dialogue. “The responses from the website were incredible. A lot of people from the Eastern Orthodox Church being incredibly thankful to us for bringing this to us, and people were having spiritual responses to the art for both cases and felt really compelled to say something and express it on our website, which was like an interesting lesson. If you do something that’s compelling and emotional —and dare I say vulnerable— people respond” (Edwards, 2013).

If the resources were available to update her physical space, co-founder of the Prelinger Library Megan Prelinger would like to see her entire collection digitized and a digital environment created that replicates the shelf-browsing experience. Part of her reasoning is that whereas the Prelinger library can accommodate about 25 people on site a day, a recent post on their Facebook page was seen by 1,500 people. But Prelinger says it's not just about access but the ability to share a more participatory experience among its community of users.

Archivist Kylie Pine of the Willamette Heritage Center similarly sees multiple levels of interaction that privilege participation with her center. From her experience, the information she shares on her blog and website seems to lead to further dialogue with participants, particularly when they feel a personal connection to the material or the region, which is shared through the comments sections, the initiation of collaborative projects, or from requests for additional information. "It seems that the majority of the comments that come up tend to be people that want something more out of it. Maybe that's just the dialogue that goes on behind the scene. It doesn't necessarily go on the blog platform itself. I get people that will email me saying, 'Well, I saw that you have this on my great uncle. Can you get me more information?' type of thing so I guess there's two levels of interaction that's going on there, both the social media aspect where people are collaboratively working on something and then the accessibility aspect, which is maybe more traditional"(Pine, 2013).

In addition to fostering a multilayered conversation, her primary perspective is that any notion of privileging participation must also involve breaking down

certain barriers and providing connections that are now possible through digital platforms and social media applications. So when Pine finds a set of letters from a World War I soldier, complete with photos of trench life and even an opera program from Paris at that time when he was either on leave or done fighting, she tries to imagine who might be out there studying WWI that would find this guy's story fascinating, how can she direct their attention to this collection of material, and what should be done to bring this soldier's story alive. The frustration, she says, comes from not just knowing how to present these materials, but more from figuring out how to use her blog or social media to get people to participate.

“So there's these experiences, this historical cultural memory, or however you want to think about it, these experiences that I think are powerful and interesting part of telling the story. But there's a disconnect between getting that story out to people and getting them engaged. And media is one way that we've seen people getting engaged. There's [sic] a lot of restrictions in a bricks-and-mortar type of institution like this. I can't bring people from West Virginia whose uncle may have died here out here to talk about their uncle's experience. There's a lot of restrictions in getting people on the site, a lot of barriers. So the blog and Facebook have provided us a way that kind of breaks down some of those barriers and maybe make a connection that way” (Pine, 2013).

When Pine started the Willamette Valley Heritage Highlights blog about three years ago, her approach was much like that of journalistic practice. As a result of fiduciary responsibility to generate revenue for the organization, she knew she couldn't just give away all of their information for free. At the same time, she had to

develop a strategy to decide what to display on the blog and provide just enough information from those items in their collection that would pique the interest of their community, encourage engagement, and increase their levels of participation.

“I put up highlights, tokens, and those kinds of information to get people excited about what’s here. Most of it is a personal reaction for me...what I think is cool. I don’t consider it unless I’m moved by the object, so in some ways that’s a curatorial statement, too. It should get people to think about history in a different way or it’s moving. I think we preserve this [collection] for the public trust but I also know that without some kind of revenue or support this all goes away. I tend to look for things that have kind of that hook. Maybe that’s a journalistic thing as well. It’s the headline. I want to hook people in and I want to get people excited. It’s the potential that it could be part of our overarching visitors services plan, our visitors studies, understanding what makes our visitors tick, what gets them excited, and what brings them back” (Pine, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to determine the ways in which heritage professionals and participants are using multimodal platforms and social media applications to clarify the participatory elements of digital practice that are constitutive of new memory practices. By identifying and interrogating these digital practices, several themes emerged for understanding how shared memory is constructed in a digital landscape.

The three predominant discursive themes introduced in this chapter include:

(1) privileging platforms; (2) privileging practices; and (3) privileging participation.

The categorization of these themes illustrates the considerations given to where digital interaction occurs, how it occurs, and why it occurs in digital cultural heritage. The specific activities and interactions with digital heritage content, multimodal platforms, and social media applications that are interpreted include new considerations and methods for choosing which platforms to use; adapting content to various platforms; engaging in collaboration; inviting and monitoring new threads of discussion; the surprises from sharing digital content; innovative processes of searching and discovery; linking and cross-referencing content and platforms; identifying motivations, preferences, and interests; alternative curatorial practices; and approaches to repurposing. In considering these forms of digital practice and meaning, we also direct our attention to forms of metrics analysis, tagging, cataloging, aggregation, and searching as being equivalent forms of selective memory recall, retention, and sharing through multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital media.

Thus, revealing how heritage professionals and participants privilege platforms, privilege practices, and privilege participation causes us to rethink how memories are shared and platformed communities of memory are formed in a multimodal context.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

*This highlights heritage significance as contingent, as shifting, and most importantly intimately embedded in contemporary and popular social practices.  
(Cameron, 2007, p. 182)*

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine how multimodal platforms and social media applications are repurposing cultural heritage institutions and memory practices. It accomplishes this by looking at the functions, performances, and attitudes of heritage practitioners and participants in the context of cultural forms and social practices integral to their digital practices of remembering.

A review of the relevant literature revealed a previous gap in media-memory research – notably absent was scholarly inquiry about how the heritage community considers its specific forms of multimodal participation and digital practices as a way to understand the processes of shared remembering in a new media landscape. This dissertation fills this gap by looking at how cultural heritage collections and archives are using a multitude of digital devices, platforms, and networks to give users the power to control and interact with digital content, including what is uploaded, viewed, commented on, shared, and repurposed. It shows that distinct modes of social practice are emerging that explain how collectively shared memories are constructed, accessed, and distributed in the digital landscape.

The study examined discursive interpretations of heritage practitioners and participants from three cultural heritage institutions in order to gather a spectrum

of evidence about a complex issues. I selected three cultural heritage institutions – the Getty Research Institute, the Prelinger Library and Archive, and the Willamette Heritage Center – for their varying degrees of digital offerings, activities, and levels of influence. The Getty Research Institute includes an internationally renowned museum and research archive that allows its participants to interact with its collection of fine arts materials across a variety of digital platforms and social media applications. The Prelinger Library and Archive is a library of cultural ephemera and film archive of amateur production that allows users to appropriate and remediate its literature and filmic offerings. Lastly, the Willamette Heritage Center is a regional heritage organization that uses its digital portal to provide access to its archival collection and construct the collective memory of a local community. The range of characteristics of the three sites informed the overall issue of how multimodal memory practices can be articulated through varying degrees of participation, through a variety of media platforms, for a variety of purposes, with a variety of digital heritage organizations.

My methodological approach for examining the discursive interpretations of heritage practitioners and participants in this study was to take a multilateral form of collecting data, through in-depth interviewing, participant observations, and thematic analysis. The in-depth interviews allowed me to gather the self-reported perspectives of cultural heritage practitioners and participants for analysis, while the limited use of participant observations enabled me to review actual digital practices and processes. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts and observation notes revealed the underlying themes. By combining these research methods, I



examined multiple facets of digital cultural heritage platforms, the participatory processes involved in their digital interfaces, and the discursive meaning constructed by heritage practitioners and participants.

This study is informed by the theoretical foundations of collective memory/media-memory discourse, remediation, and gatekeeping, along with further grounding by the social theories of art practice and agency, symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and actor-network theories. Guided by these theoretical frameworks, I examined the discursive interpretations of cultural heritage practitioners and participants to address: (1) how multimodal platforms are reshaping cultural heritage and its forms; (2) the implications that these multimodal platforms and practices have on memory construction in a digital landscape; and (3) enumerating which social practices are being privileged in digital cultural heritage through multimodal platforms

At the outset of this research, I sought to study the modes of interaction, active participation, and communication through multimodal heritage platforms as an extension of what should be considered cultural heritage. I proposed that thoughtful analysis and appraisal is necessary to better understand the complexities of participation and emerging social practices that are interwoven with how people use these digital technologies for the sake of memory construction. I also argued that what is at stake is the curatorial authority of these institutions, their commemorative practices, and the articulation of how we remember the past in the digital age.

This study addresses the following topics to provide an explanatory

framework for the social integration of these multimodal technologies into our memory practices. It defines multimodal memory practices and their relationship with digital cultural heritage; determines how cultural heritage institutions, organizations, and initiatives are using participatory media platforms; identifies the specific digital practices of users interacting with multimodal heritage platforms; examines how these social practices are reshaping the gatekeeping role of curators and the public in digital heritage; and explains how the processes of remediation and content sharing are privileging new forms of cultural heritage and redefining what can be considered digital memories of the past.

The findings of this research suggest that we need new ways to think about cultural heritage and memory practices in the new media landscape. The evidence shows that the heritage community recognizes that the broadening menu of activities and assortment of multimodal platforms are profoundly influencing what and how we choose to remember.

The clear implication of this study is that the multifaceted capabilities of the digital revolution are altering the ways cultural heritage practices facilitate, control, and influence how we interact with the traces of our past. This is true in regards to the types of artifacts we encounter, where we encounter them, who decides what we will encounter, and what we do once we encounter them, as so much of this range of dynamic memory processes now occurs through digital mediation. This transformative shift to the new media of the digital landscape will have significant repercussions for the social practices of collective memory construction and the institutions designated as the keepers and curators of these memories - the cultural

heritage industry.

The interview data show that heritage practitioners and participants believe multimodal platforms and social media applications are changing the process of cultural heritage in innumerable ways. Those involved with heritage organizations report a shift from these institutions being sites of storage, preservation, and exhibition of cultural artifacts to increasingly becoming digital conduits of cultural content exchange and intertextual relations, potentially transforming the ways in which society can consider and connect with its past.

The other salient proposition of this research suggests that memory practices are changing through the ways in which cultural heritage sites facilitate interaction with artifacts via multimodal platforms and social media applications. Respondents propose that by using multiple devices, across multiple networks, from multiple locations, they are changing their memory processes. The interview data also substantiate the view that the social practices of generating, contributing, selecting, appropriating, repurposing, and sharing digital content are how communities can now articulate shared memory in the new media landscape. Respondents also viewed these activities as creating new ways of socializing, experiencing, and sharing personal and public memories, where they can be fixed and revisited in new forms of cultural practice that allow for reinterpretation and reorganization. Lastly, there is broad agreement that the public is being invited to take a more active and participatory role in the production of meaning in the construction of how and what society collectively remembers.

The subsequent sections in this chapter detail the findings that emerged from

data collection and analysis regarding the research questions, propose the significant contributions of this dissertation, detail the limitations of the research, provide recommendations for further study, as well as provide my own concluding thoughts about what I've learned through this process.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***RQ1: How Are Multimodal Platforms Reshaping Cultural Heritage and Its Forms?***

The answers to this research question are broadly detailed through the findings presented in Chapter IV, which is organized according to five thematic categories that emerge from the interview data: (1) privileging access; (2) new forms of cultural heritage; (3) new roles within cultural heritage; (4) democratization versus curatorial authority; and (5) re-conceptualizing institutional thinking and practice. Other orders of minor interpretations also deserve further reading, including how heritage artifacts are becoming more dynamic and searchable, how the heritage process is becoming more transparent, how gamification and social media use are shifting audience expectations, and how new forms of collaboration and job duties are creating new spaces for debate.

#### *Access*

One of the most persistent themes emerging from the interview data is that multimodal platforms are considered conduits for increasing access and promise ease of use for both practitioners and participants of cultural heritage. The theme of promoting access in particular is applied across the entire spectrum of ways in which heritage archives and digital content are being used, including the

development of new forms of participatory engagement, data management, search functions, and even towards concerns over the longevity of technology formats.

Respondents to this study make clear that by definition these multimodal platforms improve access because they are used on multiple devices, across multiple networks, from multiple locations. At the same time, they argue that the multiplicity of digital formats make more data available through a broader menu of contextual arrangements. This makes digital heritage content more conducive to searching, discovery, modification, and distribution.

The findings from this research also demonstrate that greater access through a wider variety of channels equates to more voices in the conversation of meaning and interpretation. While one respondent cautions that greater access does not necessarily guarantee higher levels of participation and active engagement, most others seem to agree that these platforms offer the potential for increased involvement, broader interpretations, and more democratized versions of remembering in digital cultural heritage.

Another promise of these platforms is that they offer innovative forms of tracking access, which not only provide greater insight into user activities and preferences, but also require heritage institutions to develop a critical apparatus for the decision-making processes about how and when to provide access to their collections. While most respondents indicate a positive inclination toward multimodal platforms, in terms of providing improved means of access, there are concerns raised about such restrictions as technological obsolescence and higher costs associated with implementing and using these platforms.

### *New Forms of Cultural Heritage*

Respondents overwhelmingly suggest that among the shifting landscape of digital possibilities is the understanding that an increasing variety of heritage artifacts should now be recognized, considered, and applied to cultural heritage, not least among them the broader diversity and manifestations of digital content. What is argued here is not just that digitized objects should be included in heritage collections but also that broader categories need to be considered both in terms of content and capabilities. A case in point is the reimagining of traditional collection catalogs to now include dynamic multimedia content and more behind-the-scenes contextual information made possible through multimodal platforms and social media applications.

Respondents also acknowledge the increasing value of these multimodal platforms in producing updateable, dynamic archives, as well as new forms of analyses that make data sets and metadata more discoverable and interpretable. There is also recognition that definitions of what constitutes cultural heritage artifacts are undergoing a transformation with the vast increase in the recording and sharing of digital, user-generated content. Respondents also recommended that ephemeral materials not generally considered worthy of preservation should now be digitized and included as worthwhile components of heritage collections.

However, the most significant proposition by respondents is that social media output – the blogs, Web pages, comments, tags, status updates, shared digital content – should all now be considered an extension and legitimate emerging record of cultural heritage. This also encompasses any recordable forms of digital

participation, including annotations, citations, indices, and links, that demonstrate user input. In other words, respondents to this study suggest that cultural heritage should no longer be limited to primary materials within a collection but rather that any form of digital interaction that occurs between an institution and its community of interest should be equally accumulated, preserved, and interpreted as a valuable resource for future remembering.

#### *New Roles of Cultural Heritage Practitioners*

Heritage practitioners and participants in this study reveal a number of ways they must now adjust their roles as a result of the new features, circumstances, and environments presented by multimodal platforms. The implication is that they increasingly not only serve in the traditional capacities of preservation, interpretation, and exhibition of heritage collections but also must now take on new responsibilities as conduits of communication, social media documentation, and in aggregating digital conversations and interaction.

The evidence indicates that there is a shift in curatorial responsibilities (e.g., to now include digital curation) within the institutions studied, as well as the introduction and rewriting of entire institutional positions, titles, and departments. This shift requires new skills, functions, and the hiring people who are qualified to occupy the emerging roles necessary to conduct an ambitious digital agenda. Respondents also suggest that this shift changes the complexity of how things are communicated inside and outside the institutions, from managing social media conversations to articulating new policies.

While most respondents confirm that multimodal platforms and social media

applications can enhance and amplify their research knowledge and expertise through such mechanisms as expert social tagging and crowdsourcing, there remains a consistent expression of concern that these technologies also pose significant challenges to their curatorial authority, which is discussed further in the following section.

### *Democratization Versus Curatorial Authority*

The enhanced position of the public and their expectations in digital heritage emerges as a significant topic of debate among respondents to this study. This can be interpreted as a nascent struggle between traditional notions of curatorial authority, where curators and cultural heritage professionals determine what should be collected, preserved, exhibited, as well as how it should be interpreted, and a growing refrain for democratization that concedes to the public a larger role in those same processes and decisions.

The potential for increased public participation through digital platforms, peer-to-peer network access, and social media applications seems to warrant shifting attitudes regarding who should be the arbiter of authority in privileging cultural heritage. The research shows that respondents are well aware of the fact that digital platforms make it easier for the public to weigh in on the explanations and interpretations of digital heritage content, yet they also indicate this triggers a balancing act for heritage practitioners to meet the needs of those who want a classic museum experience and those who would prefer to engage with a collection through multimodal platforms and social media applications. Most respondents express a desire to defer more to the public in the process but find themselves



equally unsure just how far that should go or where the differences between heritage practitioners and participants should be demarcated.

This line of discussion throughout the interviews also raises complex questions about institutional identity and public entitlement in cultural heritage. While certain practitioners consider their institutions to be authoritative arbiters and not as interested in public opinion, feedback, or contributions, some others want to lower the barriers of access and become more appropriative spaces for the public. Respondents also noted that public expectations are changing, so that people want more access, more voice, more media features, more of their own materials, and less of an institutional voice. What this reveals is a lingering concern by some respondents that cultural heritage could result in some undefined formation of high culture and popular culture bricolage.

Perhaps most revealing from respondents' answers is the clear recognition that notions of curatorial authority, even gatekeeping, are much more convoluted now as a result of multimodal platforms and social media applications. For instance, more responsibility is now given to technology specialists in the digital heritage process as curatorial authority extends to what to save, on what servers, or what applications can be used to exhibit or analyze digital content. Several respondents point to how even social media output can be controlled by censors, programmers, or algorithms, raising further questions of curatorial authority in machine-mediated or digitally curated experiences. To complicate the matter further, one respondent highlights the simple fact that in the digital heritage processes of preservation and interpretation, there are multiple layers of gatekeepers -- those who donate items to

a collection; those who compile categorical information; the curators who decide what to show or how to interpret; those in charge of communicating information across multimodal platforms; and the multimodal platforms themselves, which control searching, viewing, repurposing, and sharing -- all of which have a say in how something is understood. In the face of this reality, how can authority even be deciphered when so many have the keys to the gates of what and how we should remember?

Acknowledging that there are differences between preservation, interpretation, and being a forum in a digital landscape, some suggestions respondents make to clarify the subject are that more interaction and collaboration are needed; more contributions from the public should be accepted as long as the original is maintained in a collection; heritage practitioners should reveal more of their decision-making process; and that there needs to be more of a two-way conversation and more interactive knowledge shared with communities of interest. The rationale behind these suggestions is clearly voiced by one respondent who indicates that “expert curatorial impulse” is necessary when faced with the “undifferentiated flow” of digital platforms to direct our attentions but that there should not be “a dictatorship of gatekeepers” so that “no one gets in” (Scott, 2013).

#### *Reconceptualizing Institutional Thinking and Practice*

The findings in this research demonstrate that in an attempt to remain relevant, in the rapidly changing, networked media landscape, cultural heritage institutions are being challenged to redefine their identities, functions, and conventional approaches to participatory remembering. Respondents to this study

explain some of the reflexive and procedural strategies for adjusting to the changing conditions of such externalities. Respondents recommend additional efforts for transparency that detail less of the final products and more of the heritage procedures, including behind-the-scene decision-making, interpretive processes, and digital sharing of events and activities. These suggestions are made in part to increase interest levels among their communities but more so to maintain relevance in the face of competing knowledge sharing platforms such as Wikipedia.

Other practical measures respondents raised include how to address the plans for and costs of digitization, as well as how to navigate changing legal frameworks and compensate for the anticipated obsolescence of digital platforms and technologies. Another finding related to this line of inquiry is that heritage institutions are more frequently employing gamification strategies and platforms to present digital content and increase public involvement. It is also suggested that more attention be paid to how institutional choices challenge our own thinking as a society about how and why we choose to participate in the construction of memories in a digital environment.

***RQ2: What Are the Implications of These Multimodal Platforms and Practices on Memory Construction in a Digital Landscape?***

The second research question is addressed in Chapter V of this study, which asks respondents to consider the role of cultural heritage on collective memory and to explore the temporal complications of multimodality on memory practices, or what it means to interact with different devices, across different networks, from different locations. The findings related to these subjects deal with the questions of

authenticity and the potentials of digital platforms with accruing value, significance, and promise in providing new formats, spaces, and contexts.

The evidence is categorized according to three discursive themes that emerged from the interview data: (1) the presumed role of heritage institutions as both arbiters of memory and sites of debate/contestation; (2) the differences between the authenticity of experiencing digital surrogates and source objects in their institutional context; and (3) the discursive themes regarding multimodality, including dimensions of choice, uninhibited participation, simultaneous presence, larger viewing spaces, broader scale of interest, and other composite aspects of selection and sharing.

#### *Shaping the Memory Debate Through Cultural Heritage*

Respondents to this study make a strong case that cultural heritage institutions should be considered as being keepers of cultural memory or memory institutions. Their rationale is that a primary purpose for these institutions is to preserve, interpret, and exhibit tangible and intangible objects of cultural production from the past and present to be reviewed at a later date by future generations. In this way, these heritage institutes position themselves as spheres of debate about how and what we should remember.

There is common agreement among respondents that their roles as both repositories of cultural heritage content and facilitators of knowledge are indeed conducive to the formation of collective memory because their purpose of initiating conversations around evidence of past cultural production also promotes a more extensive dialogue about shared interests, knowledge, and content to a broader

audience. However, there is not agreement on just how this is accomplished or how effective they are in affecting what society chooses to remember.

One viewpoint focuses on multimodal heritage platforms as being a mediated form of collaboration and exchange that are reminiscent of the performative act of selective memory because of the selectivity of what and how they choose to explain what is of value to remember. Another view of their role is shaped by the participatory element of where cultural memories can be expressed, debated, and contested. While some see cultural heritage institutions as a trusted voice or source of information about our cultural pasts, there is also recognition that they are not the sole voice and must compete with a mosaic of other sources of memory production to develop a more complete picture of our shared, memorable past.

Another argument that is presented holds that too much emphasis is put on preservation and not enough on cultural performance, a position that highlights the memory of participation over a collection of artifacts. In this regard, several viewpoints reveal a preference for giving public participants more agency in the process of cultural heritage. One such description posits that heritage institutions are only as relevant as how much they let their audiences participate in terms of cultural remembering. This position also highlights what participants choose to privilege, which fosters further discussion about how we attribute meaning through the ways in which we remember the past. Put another way, cultural heritage organizations can only culturally construct a memory of what happened if they can reference what a community wants to recall, connect individual stories to a larger narrative of community identity, as well as develop enough fascination within their

audience to get them to want to interact collection materials.

Despite these different viewpoints, a central feature that emerges among the responses is that cultural heritage institutions play a significant role as conduits between the conservation of content and the continuity of culture.

*Negotiating Authentic Experience and Digital Surrogates*

An expressed concern that deserves its own thematic emphasis was how cultural heritage institutions must navigate between the perceptions of authentic experience and the expectations of digital surrogates. The interview data suggest there is a philosophical conundrum over which experience is more authentic – being in the presence of primary material and real objects in an institutional setting versus interacting with digital traces in a dynamic format.

The perspectives that are voiced included the possibility that physical and digital collections are not necessarily incompatible but can in fact be complementary to one another. One respondent fears the loss of contextual arrangement in the digital environment can result in user disorientation without the projected air of authority, authenticity, and primacy of a physical collection in a heritage institution. A differing point of view argues that the multimodal platforms can provide more context, not less, because of the analogical connections, referential value, broader interpretations, and discovery users may experience in a networked environment.

One respondent poses the question about whether the notion of context and authenticity are no more than museum constructs, meaning that institutions are in

many ways simply framing our point of view about what we should consider to be authentic. Another questions if authenticity or originality can even be determined among the various versions of primary sources, interpretations, or derivative works. The point is that every version offers a degree of accuracy in detail or referential value, and there will always be questions of authenticity that remain based on perception or orientation. A subsequent argument is that experiencing something in-person or digitally should be thought of as neither being equivalents nor as incongruous but rather as simply having different potentials, from a different dimension of choices.

Among these divergent viewpoints, one respondent proposes that most viewers are capable of simultaneous presence in that they can understand the difference between the material and the digital, so whatever notion of authentic experience we ascribe to either is really a matter of personal preference and choice rather than an a priori determination. The predominant view among respondents, however, is expressed as an underlying concern that the digital on some level will come to replace the central experience, where the sense of the media might surpass the reality of the masterpiece.

#### *Interplay Between Multimodal Platforms and Memory Practice*

A surprising diversity of perspectives reveals the perceived effects of multimodality on memory practices, ranging from the reshaping of performative sociality to distributive knowledge to the memory sharing capabilities of these networked platforms. While all agree they believed that multimodality is reshaping the playing fields of cultural heritage and memory practice, many of the following

perspectives offer oppositional readings and dichotomous viewpoints, indicating both the subjective and predictive nature of the issue.

For example, one stance assumes that increasing attention to multiple screens, across multiple networks, from multiple locations will inherently lead to fragmented audiences, whereas an opposing view expresses that platformed communities of memory could be formed between those who are participating in and interacting with digital content through the functions of these platforms and applications. There is broad agreement, however, that multimodality promises ease of use, broader scales of interest to be linked together, and increased opportunities for participation.

One proposal is that the performative qualities of multimodal platforms, which allow people to share their interests, experiences, and content rather than it being broadcast at them, offers equal potential for uninhibited participation, information overload, mass distraction, or the means to expand a conversation. They are also seen as encouraging broader meaning because they can connect people more easily for the sharing of knowledge. It is also presumed that having the ability to circulate digital content and experiences through different devices from different locations creates a new toolbox for what and how we choose to remember.

One perspective is that multimodality is not really about the digital material that is being generated and shared, but that what is most revealing are the connections and filtering processes that are traced and documented. By following the trail of digital fingerprints – the evidence of conversations, searches, Web hits, and links – heritage practitioners and participants are leaving inscriptions of their



own interests, inclinations, and behaviors as digital breadcrumbs, even institutional memory, that were never before available. As a result, this increasingly documented discussion and activity offers the potential to be rediscovered and revisited much like mementos or souvenirs can stir memories, creating a broader record of reminiscence. Multimodality in these terms can be seen as offering more profound modes of remembering by thinking of metadata that are analyzed and interpreted in innovative ways – through large-scale analytic insight, algorithmic analysis, and dynamically contextualized search functions - as forms of mediated memories. There is a refreshing or referencing practice that allows content and information to be rediscovered later, establishing another node for collective memory in how we can even refer to the past.

However, revealing these unpredictable pathways, unforeseen connections, and new forms of filtering requires heritage practitioners and participants alike to relinquish any semblance of control in this decentralized experience. We also cannot forget that easily replicated or manipulated digital material can just as easily skew our perspectives. In such cases, more widely distributed heritage content has the potential to either play a clarifying or distorting role in how we interpret or remember mediated memories. One respondent also suggests that social behaviors and etiquettes are being dramatically reordered by anonymous participation and pressure to interact with these platforms. As a result of fewer barriers to contributing user-generated materials, respondents report an increase in narcissistic self-documentation, different views about intimacy, and fewer concerns over privacy, which also may have a profound impact on what is remembered.

Findings also suggest an order of positive outcomes as a result of widespread dissemination, participation, and mediated curation made possible by multimodality. With changes in the rates of how things are viewed, including accessibility to a wider audience, there is the potential for more readily shared personal, direct relationships and experiences. This is not just about access but also about the self-selecting aspects of digital platforms and the agency of networking possibilities that exhibit our preferences and privileging practices, both of which are clear indicators of how deeply we want to get involved.

The immediacy of these technologies as they become part of our everyday routines and incorporated into almost every activity also offers the potential for immense freedom and space for cultural expression, all of which can reveal telling aspects about our choices in what we are choosing to document, collect, share, and how we are inhabiting certain spaces online. Some even view it as a permanent space of conversation and negotiation from different time periods, different geographies, different cultures, that can all happen on a continuous basis. As such, the ubiquity of these devices in our daily lives and their persistent use practically guarantees more evidence of how and what we want to remember.

The gatekeeping aspect of multimodality also garners more attention as control is increasingly exerted by machine intelligence through password protection, firewalls, algorithms, and other protocols. A renewed focus on gatekeeping in this multimodal environment is also suggested for those who become the new authorities on what gets accessed, distributed, and remembered, such as search engines, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Following these connective tissues

suggests that trusted sources, opinion leaders, and gatekeepers are found increasingly through social media applications and multimodal platforms that are directing people's attentions and traffic through following, linking, commenting, posting, and tweeting.

Lastly, there is some sense that the scale and scope of multimodal connections can lead to more action, foster outreach activities, and reorganize archival practices. However, some still wonder whether there is equal opportunity for mass distraction or that the ubiquitous, saturating, and common media being shared across multimodal platforms, social media, and digital networks could equally lead to memories that are less precious from which to remember.

***RQ3: What Memory Practices Are Being Privileged and Articulated in Digital Heritage Through Multimodal Platforms?***

The findings to this research question are detailed in Chapter VI, which examines how heritage professionals and participants are actually using these multimodal platforms and what such activity means to them in the process. The purpose is to identify the participatory elements of digital social practice and behavior that are constitutive of new memory practices. The chapter is organized according to three predominant themes: (1) privileging platforms; (2) privileging practices; and (3) privileging participation. Each of these themes addresses where digital interaction and activity occurs, how it occurs, and why it occurs in digital cultural heritage.

The findings generally suggest that we need to re-interpret the digital practices of posting, commenting, expressing data, sharing, repurposing, or

alternative curation of digital heritage content as prime examples for how to rethink memory practices in a multimodal context. The evidence also suggests that in considering these forms of digital practice and meaning, we should also direct our attention to forms of analysis, tagging, cataloging, aggregation, and searching as equivalent forms of selective memory recall, retention, and sharing through multimodal platforms, social media applications, and digital media. Other issues that arise include: new methods and considerations for adapting content to various platforms; linking data between institutions and users; inviting collaboration; monitoring new threads of discussion; the surprises of sharing digital material; the processes of discovery; and the computational analyses of metrics. All relate to emerging digital behaviors that demonstrate how communities can articulate shared memory in the new media landscape.

### *Privileging Platforms*

The findings in this section demonstrate that how multimodal platforms are privileged constitute a significant part of the conversation in digital heritage. The suggestion is that before cultural heritage institutions can set out on an ambitious digital agenda or involve themselves in platformed interactivity, certain determinations are made about which digital platforms and social media applications are most appropriate to use and for what purpose. This decision-making process is now a significant priority for cultural heritage institutions as they reposition themselves to assume expanded roles in networked conversations and interactions through multimodal heritage platforms.

Such decisions are also made by first determining the purpose and

capabilities of specific platforms and social media, as well as by developing a clear vision about how best to adapt digital content and assets to the various platforms. Other choices can then be made as to where and how to represent their digital content, as well as decisions about how to interact with the content and each other in the process. The most common refrain is that determining which social media application makes the most sense to accomplish a goal is becoming just as crucial in digital heritage as choosing what content should be preserved, exhibited, and interpreted.

There is also recognition that conveying information more effectively requires considering the nuances of each social media applications, and its user community, and subsequently adapting content and interactive possibilities to the parameters of each platform. These realizations indicate a shift in thinking by heritage institutions about how to tailor information based on both the platform and the audience that uses that particular platform. Other related decisions to be made include whether it is sufficient to adapt digital content to a particular platform or if other capabilities can be introduced, such as tracking activity, alternative curation practices, posting, indexing, commenting, tagging, sharing, or even creating new interactive environments. These choices are often driven by metrics to tracks user engagement as much as being used for drumming up the most interest, conducting certain activities, and conveying certain content.

Another factor involves how cultural heritage institutions can play a much larger role in initiating the conversation by determining which platform to use, but have much less say about the continuation of the conversation or what is concluded.

Heritage practitioners and participants must recognize the fact that placing content on a particular platform does not necessarily equate to where it might end up because of digital sharing, linking, and repurposing. It is also understood that content may be appropriated and re-used in ways that are counter to their original intent.

As a result of this reality, heritage practitioners recognize that they must also now consider how best to direct their resources to monitoring the conversations being discussed in these realms. Part of this monitoring involves developing dedicated teams or staff who must devote their energies to the functions of these platforms and social media applications, as well as understand the varying complexities of participation when each platform has its own parameters and capacities. Also required is the recognition that certain platforms are more prescriptive and defined and less open and participatory. Thus, in privileging platforms, cultural heritage institutions must also reposition themselves less as stewards of collections and more as conduits, collaborators, and facilitators of an ongoing conversation in a networked social sphere.

There are so many ways to propel and interact with digital information through so many platforms and social media applications that it is equally necessary for heritage professionals and participants to consider what they are interested in sharing, with whom, and why. These choices play a significant role in privileging platforms for creating a platformed community of memory by whom they choose to share information with and in memory construction by what they do with it.

Cultural heritage institutions must now consider these ramifications, as they are no

longer directing a line of thinking as much as they are reacting to what their communities of interest want to talk about as they privilege themselves, their own choices, and their own interests in what they want to remember.

Respondents report that they believe participants are getting out of their social media use what they want, including new forms of collaboration and knowledge production, rather than what the cultural institutions want to offer through the platforms they privilege. Furthermore, it is accepted generally that social media applications are used to satisfy personal preferences and activities, allowing users to preference certain social media applications as a strategy to curate themselves and their own interests as a form of memory practice. Therefore, heritage institutions must achieve the necessary balance between what they want to promote, what a platform can provide, and what a user is hoping to accomplish by using it.

Several respondents indicate that it would be more effective for cultural heritage institutions to use multimodal platforms and social media applications for facilitating dialogue among its community of users rather than primarily as mechanisms for increasing access to items within their collection. Such dialogues might involve in-depth discussions about new acquisitions to a collection, art restoration and preservation, new programs, how provenance is determined and tracked, or how decisions are generally made in cultural heritage. It is suggested another strong feature would be to privilege platforms that allow users to contribute their own insight, material, and share content according to their own interests and what is of value to them.

Respondents indicate how these decisions are made in heritage institutions is often a determination of a web of legal issues, staffing issues, and psychological-like readiness issues, as much as an understanding of which digital platform will reach the broadest audience and stir the greatest reaction. Maintaining a digital presence and the legal ramifications for blurring the boundaries between its own prerogatives and those allowed by using social media applications are not always so clear-cut. This decision-making process, beyond just how to tailor content to particular platforms, also involves deciding whether developing new technology applications is necessary for a particular project. Such choices should be based on the clear understanding that making decisions in conjunction with curators about what looks good on a website or digital platform, and is even representative of an idea they want to convey with an exhibit, may still result in a lack of visitors. This realization only underscores the necessity to privilege the proper platform not just as the best form of delivery for reaching an audience but more so for allowing the interaction necessary for promoting multimodal memory practices.

### *Privileging Practices*

This section references the specific ways in which participants use multimodal platforms, allowing us to draw correlations between distinctive patterns of use and the discursive interpretations for why those practices invite the formation and sharing of memory in a digital landscape. What is suggested is that digital practices and interpretive exercises that produce deeper levels of engagement have a significant impact on how memorable an activity in terms of how and what we remember.



Respondents to this study indicate overwhelmingly that they believe these platforms offer users more performative choices than strict directives by giving users the agency to decide their own comfort levels for how much they want to participate. For example, depending on what participants find of most value to their own interests and pursuits, multimodal platforms and social media applications gradually allow for casual to more robust engagement and interaction. In other words, it may start with users finding a digital object they have an interest in and then lead to further participation that can range from 'liking' the object to engaging in further dialogue through commenting to developing their own alternative curation methods, depending on the capabilities of the platform. It is suggested that this form of selective participation be equated to selective memory because it similarly offers participants the choice of how deeply they want to revisit an object from the past.

Further substantiating this point, it is proposed that what people privilege about themselves and share about their own discoveries through multimodal platforms and social media applications indicates a great deal about what people want to remember. There is broad agreement that the capacity for users to add to the narrative, change the meaning or interpretation, or create their own versions is much like creating new associations or adding their own memories to the traces of a larger cultural mix. Most respondents indicate that our memory processes are framed by how deeply involved we are with an activity or by how broadly the experience is shared in the digital landscape. In other words, respondents believe it is not really the digital content itself but rather how involved our interaction is with

that content that proves most memorable.

Another finding is that measuring patterns of digital behavior and interaction is a useful exercise for assessing platform effectiveness and usability, as well as analyzing user preferences and observing what people are choosing to remember. It is suggested that one of the best ways to measure such patterns is the analysis of metrics, which is a form of institutional memory that not only allows for an expression of data but also provides insight of user's past preferences, as well as affirms an institution's past decisions. In this way, metrics analytics can be seen as a social practice that is relevant to the memory-making process because it reveals how participants search for, find, and use digital heritage content. It is also essential to consider how an institution evaluates its own digital practices so as to better understand how to generate knowledge for the future. Considering the analysis of metrics in this way, a simple business practice or institutional assessment is reframed as a form of reconsidering previous choices, activities, or experience, which can now be thought of as institutional memory.

Respondents suggest that algorithms make descriptive data, catalog information, and entire data sets more referencable, which can lead to further interaction, cross-referencing through linking, and sharing that connects people, content, and ideas in instantaneous and wide-ranging ways that were not possible before networked social platforms. Such capabilities allow scholars to conduct research projects, publish their results, identify heritage artifacts, link information to the databases, and accommodate their scholarly conversation, including showing oppositional readings and divergent interpretations in ways that repurpose the

searching process itself, expand interpretations, and crowdsource meaning. By tracing this process with a single artifact, following its digital trail and all of the interaction surrounding it, in itself shows the memory of an object that will be revised as it continues to be digitally revisited and repurposed through a variety of platforms and collaborative processes.

For instance, though the Prelinger Archive is the primary Internet source of the film “A Trip Down Market Street Before the Fire,” it shows some 143,000 hits on archive.org spread over several versions and derivative works of the film. If the film is searched on YouTube as “trip down Market Street 1906,” there are 1,318,118 views on just the first page, including enhancements and derivative works that present substantially unedited versions of the film. There is also a music video presenting a solid chunk of the film that currently shows 3,208,887 views, while another version had some 4 million views before it was taken down. This suggests the Prelinger film has been mirrored, multiplied, and repurposed across numerous platforms.

Considering other forms of participatory digital practices, such as repurposing content, alternative curation activities, and other associative interactions, also reveals how people may want to recall digital content through multimodal platforms. These considerations affect not only the searching and discovery process but also offer the capability to turn objects of cultural production into digital keepsakes as another way for participants to revisit, renegotiate, or remember their experiences with a heritage collection and share it in ways that are meaningful for them. Respondents determined that deeper levels of interaction

through interpretive repurposing of cultural forms are far more impactful and memorable than a more transitory activity of simply “liking” something. Understanding this relationship is also important for heritage institutions so that they can develop comprehensive and collaborative strategies for leveraging digital practices through their multimodal platforms as a means to anticipate how users might want to interact with, find, or recall their content in the future.

Most significant in these findings is that respondents believe there is a certain investment in multimodal interaction, not only in seeking out information but also then having the ability to connect that information with other artifacts, content, or ideas, which leads to additional forms, dialogue, and previously unforeseen connections that combined are considered as being most memorable. The more invested the activity, the more it is remembered. That is why it is no surprise that among the respondents in this study, the privileged practices of sharing and repurposing are considered the most memorable forms of multimodal practices.

#### *Privileging Participation*

This research also shows that these multimodal platforms and practices are inviting the redefinition of what participation means in a digital environment that offers new modes of interaction, increased engagement, broader interpretation, and new forms of contribution. Respondents indicate that heritage practitioners and participants have to rethink their behavioral processes and what they’re doing with this newfound promise of participation. They also suggest it is not just about access but the ability to share a more participatory experience among their community of

users, which then also requires more consideration for how to determine reasons or motivations for participation.

One line of thinking is that curators' decisions about what to show, how to interpret an object, or what level of participation are influenced by how many "likes" or views a particular object gets, or by a certain thread of discussion in a forum generated by the public. This reality could change collection policies, what is being exhibited, or even the collection itself if curators begin making decisions or include more material based on mass appeal expressed through digital platforms or social media activity.

However, notions of participation are not reserved for the public and popular appeal alone. There are types of research, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and aggregation of data that also indicate preferences and hold sway over institutional participation. So the issue then becomes how to determine whose participation should be privileged. For instance, should a heritage institution base its decisions on visiting members of the public, social media feeds, number of website views, links from other sources, or outside professionals and scholars who choose certain research projects? The findings point to a certain reactivity for how heritage institutions must confront broader institutional participation. Respondents express that changes in participation are neither a one-size-fits-all proposition nor do they necessarily apply across the board to every institution. At the same time, respondents indicate there is now a level of transparency and dialogue about participation that would not have been there before these digital applications.

Respondents suggest that comments sections, the initiation of collaborative

projects, or requests for additional information on multimodal platforms are also reshaping the debate as to whom decides what and how we remember. The approach of applying personal interest to broader institutional participation also has implications for how social media feeds or comment sections should be treated because they are key indicators of how heritage professionals, researchers, and the public can build connections between content and their own experience. Another interesting demarcation is drawn where social media applications such as Flickr or Pinterest become some sort of cultural heritage based on what the public wants to highlight or keep versus the collections selected by traditional museums or cultural heritage institutions.

While recognizing there are still limits on unfettered participation based on platform constraints or institutional policies, respondents explain their primary perspective is that any notion of privileging participation must also involve breaking down certain barriers and providing connections that are now possible through digital platforms and social media applications. These technologies are reshaping how we consider participation and fostering a multilayered conversation that forces those entrusted with the preservation of heritage to rethink what participation means in multimodal memory practice. Although heritage institutions may remain as gatekeepers to our collective pasts, it appears that multimodal participation is opening the gates just a little bit wider to who chooses what will be remembered.

#### **FINAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The clear implications of this research are that new forms of cultural

production are being incorporated into cultural heritage; along with new methods of distribution; new means of organizing and collecting; and new practices for exhibiting, sharing, and interpretation. All of this is bound to transform the ways in which society will consider its shared past.

Envisioning a future where our expressions of cultural heritage are increasingly digital is likely to produce a transformed landscape for shared social memory, where future historians will be less dependent on cultural heritage institutions as the central repositories of our cultural production and memories.

While many sociopolitical questions will remain about the narratives produced by cultural heritage institutions, future scholars will have at their disposal more evidence of what society deems of value based on what members of the public have digitally recorded, posted, and shared. These new user-generated formulations also present new contexts concerning the circumstances and venues where representations of media memory can be observed, experienced, and researched.

If cultural heritage institutions want to maintain their relevance in the networked environment of participatory remembering, they will need to devise strategies to redefine their identities, functions, and procedures to avoid obsolescence. Another challenge this presents for future scholars will be how they determine what to parse through among the vast panoply of digital traces and evidence. Will our social media discourse and activities be deemed as useful as heritage collections? Will there be a hierarchy of which social media forms are considered to be more useful or informative? Will the cultural memories produced through the multimodal platforms and social media applications be driven more by

Internet Service Providers, social media companies, technical protocols, heritage practitioners, or the public? These are questions that deserve more scholarly attention.

While I have attempted to avoid defining the demarcation between personal and social memory in this study, I also recommend that more study be applied to how these digital forms and practices have cognitive and neurobiological implications. Understanding which forms of digital content and practices are most memorable, effective, and lasting from a neurobiological sense can also inform how we consider our shared digital pasts.

More scholarly inquiry should also be directed toward the underlying significance and meaning of how and why we interact with social media applications in general. Attention to these elements of digital memory practices will further shape our understanding of cultural remembrance in multimodal environments, particularly in regards to the position of the public as more active and participatory producers of meaning in the construction of shared memory.

Finally, if I am to predict the future of our remembering, memory scholars years from now will not only have more digital pathways to investigate as proof of our interests and activities, but they will also have the additional struggle of trying to sort through even more digital pabulum to find meaning from the evidence we are leaving behind. That is why I argue it is so essential to understand what we are doing with these digital traces, why we are doing it, and what all of this digital practice means in terms of cultural memory. It would be too simplistic to dismiss our social media content and activities as being narcissistic, trifling, frivolous, or



inconsequential. The ubiquity of our participation with these platforms indicates that more forms of social documentation will continue for the foreseeable future. However, what that evidence will say in the future about our present moment, and from whose point of view it will be told, is far less certain.

### **SIGNIFICANCE, CONTRIBUTIONS & FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

I propose that our notions of mediated collective memory require a new focus. Our cultural attentions have shifted significantly since the days when most of the population tuned in to three network stations to share in televised events. Perhaps it was easier to gauge collective memories by how many people watched a broadcast in that legacy media environment. However, times have changed and more people's attentions are diverted to more screens. These developing contingencies mean we must extend our focus to the memory practices of sharing digital content and platformed communities of memory that are connected by multimodal platforms and social media applications.

We are interacting with and sharing professional and user-generated content, across networks and platforms, as indicators of our interests, our experiences, and what we want to remember. This content and activity is also being driven by our own choices of platforms, with whom we want to share it, and by deciding our own comfort levels of involvement. Thus, with user-generated content constituting a growing segment of social media output, it is becoming essential to understand how the social process of sharing digital content might also reinforce our collective cultural memories of events that can now be accessed and distributed across a multitude of devices, platforms, and networks. Each time we engage with

these technologies and their digital content we are potentially changing what constitutes our memories and how we remember the past in the digital age.

The significance of this research is that it builds toward a theoretical stance of what I call *multimodal memory practices*. As we move further away from collective memories shared by viewing legacy media broadcasts and more towards the ubiquitous sharing of experience and media content across multimodal platforms and social media, the concept of multimodal memory practices provides a useful explanatory framework for studying memory practices through the examination of digital practices. This framework does not replace other shared memory processes (e.g., watching a news broadcast or visiting a culturally significant site) but is instead an attempt to extend our understanding of the relationship between the media and cultural memory as we increasingly turn our attentions to and conduct our activities through various devices, across various networks, from various locations.

Another important facet to all of this is that we must reconsider activities such as viewing, uploading, commenting, linking, “liking,” sharing, and repurposing as constituting our memory practices in the networked environment of the digital landscape. Also, how extended, durable, or memorable these shared memories are depends in large part by how we perceive our own levels of engagement and participation. So the most significant contribution of this study is that we must rethink, implicate, and study our digital behaviors and practices if we are to understand what sharing memory means in a multimodal context.

We are increasingly sharing media and digital content as expression of what

we want to remember and with whom we want to share it. So not only must we direct our focus of inquiry to digital practices but we must also consider that *platformed communities of memory* result from who is connecting and interacting with digital content according to our social networks. This is one of the most surprising findings of this research and one that requires further examination. What began in this study as a nod to Malkki's (1997) notions of accidental communities of memory, my contribution of platformed communities of memory is shown to be a relevant reality in studying multimodal memory practices because we are connecting ourselves to others by our own digital sharing practices within broader social networks. As a result of this study, I have become convinced that it is equally important to review multimodal memory practices as it is to further understand how platformed communities of memory are formed through this digital participation and interaction.

The discussion of multimodal memory practices represents the number of ways we can analyze, view, link, search, visualize, and interact with digital content as a form of cumulative memory. Everything is traceable and documented. What was said, where, when, by whom, including every annotation and view, becomes relevant data that can be replayed, revisited, and repurposed. From metadata to interpretation, every element of interaction becomes more transparent as it is retrieved, rediscovered, reinterpreted, reconnected, and redistributed. So another significant proposition is that the analysis of metadata should be thought of as forms of individual object and institutional memory because through metadata we can revisit, refresh, and recall every node of interaction with digital content.

Refer back to the Getty photograph, “Google Earth, Dresden, circa 1800,” discussed in Chapter III. It was one of the Getty’s most popular Facebook posts with “three times more reach than any post and twice as many people talking about it” (GRI, 2013). More than 19,338 unique users saw the post, 987 unique users who clicked on the post, and 328 unique users who created a story about a post, including those who “liked” or shared the post, answered a posted question, or responded to an event invitation. This post also led to a series of repurposing activities, including conversations, translations, and adaptations by a community of panoramic photographers. In other words, every detailed moment of interaction is available for review and remembering.

This dissertation also adds to the literature in that it focuses on the discursive interpretations derived from the perspectives of an affected community – heritage practitioners and participants - regarding their specific conceptualizations and social practices, not just theoretical potential. Emerging from the findings of these discursive interpretations, I also propose that we consider social media comments, metadata, annotations, and other evidence of digital activity as both cultural heritage and further record of what we culturally want to remember. Understanding these relationships is important not just for heritage institutions but for any digital content provider, media platform, and social network so that they can develop comprehensive and collaborative strategies for leveraging digital practices through their multimodal platforms as a means to anticipate how users might want to interact with, find, or recall their content in the future.

## **CONNECTING THE DOTS IN THEORY**

One of the guiding principles that inform this dissertation comes from Geil and Rabinovitz (2004), who argue that the digitality of communication technologies should be examined for their capacity to alter communicative practice, articulate social existence, and privilege perceptual knowledge. Much of the discussion that is found in these pages does just that by exploring and highlighting the interrelationship between multimodal technologies, digital practice, and social memory formation from the perspective of cultural heritage practitioners and participants.

The discursive interpretations that emerge from this research validate and extend many of the assertions initially proposed in the literature review (see Chapter II). For example, the overwhelming perception of respondents in this study supports Cameron (2007) in the assertion that multimodal platforms are turning cultural heritage initiatives, projects, and institutions into conduits of cultural experience because they are increasingly enabling diverse groups of users to contribute their own cultural knowledge and production. Similarly, there is broad support among the interview data for Russo and Watkins' (2007) proposition that cultural institutions will need to remediate cultural narratives and experience as an expansion of their curatorial mission; Whitcomb's (2007) appraisal that new, more flexible forms of cultural heritage institutions will need to emerge that focus more on audience needs; as well as Parry's (2007) notion that there will arise a more "reciprocal and complex" relationship between cultural institutions and the public

in memory construction (p. 5). This suggests, much like Cameron and Robinson (2007), that cultural heritage institutions are increasingly serving as digital knowledge environments, which offer greater contextual possibilities, the inclusion of additional multimedia, new navigational pathways, and multiple narratives and meanings around heritage collections. The broad implication of these findings supports the idea that our collective recollections will increasingly be shaped by the multimodal mediation of digital content and cultural practice (Brockmeier, 2010).

Applying the theoretical frameworks of gatekeeping and remediation to this research also proves to be a useful approach and an informative move for the purposes of this study. Even though Roberts (2005) describes gatekeeping as being a descriptive framework with little predictive power, much consideration and interpretation is evident in this study's analysis that shows increasing interest toward curatorial authority, of controlling the flow of information, as an application for understanding the roles of cultural heritage professionals and participants in a networked environment. The discursive interpretations emerging from this study indicate there is considerable rethinking about the digital aspect of how memories can be curated, preserved, and disseminated in ways that are not so fixed to material artifacts, a particular location or community, or even necessarily restricted to the traditional notions of curatorial authority. This falls in line with Cameron and Robinson (2007), who suggest that curators will become more like "experience brokers" who provide less of an overarching explanation and instead "become more involved in bringing together and linking forms of evidence" according to "user contexts and preferences" (p. 185).

What this implies is that the gatekeeping process of who decides what is collected, saved, and contextualized for our collective memory is less constrained by a handful of institutional specialists in a multimodal, networked environment. Broader participation by the public in these decisions could in fact mean a wider selection of what constitutes cultural heritage artifacts and, more significantly, a more varied interpretation of what these items might mean for our recollections.

However, researchers attempting to further understand the shift in curatorial authority occurring in digital cultural heritage and the digital humanities as a result of participatory media, multimodal platforms, and social media applications will find gatekeeping theory to be a good starting point and a valuable explanatory framework for grounding their discussions. Considering who controls access, interpretation, and the domains of remembering is an important feature of this research but there is still much to be learned about the evolving nature of whose voice will be most prominent in the future articulation of cultural heritage.

Bolter and Grusin's (1996) remediation theory is equally useful for informing any discussion regarding digitized media content and digital practices. The formative aspect of this theoretical construct is that it allows researchers to reassess the digital transformation of material and activities, a central feature to digital cultural heritage and digital humanities, and allows for the reinterpretation of representation and interaction in a digital environment. One of the most persistent themes that emerge throughout the interview data is the logic that implies digital technologies are redefining objects, associations, structures of meaning, and social practices that we use to consider the past through digital

heritage. Or put more simply, the heritage practitioners and participants responding in this study make a strong and repeated case that we are literally remediating the ways in which we remember.

Applying the social constructivist, symbolic interactionist, and art practice and agency approaches to social theory in this study is similarly instructive in explaining the discursive interpretations of particular heritage communities. This answers the call of Kansteiner (2002), who argues that further research is needed on affected groups rather than texts, locations, or events in memory studies. These approaches also respond to Gell (1998), who considers it far more important to examine those “social agents,” social processes, and social settings as a system of action involved in their production than the aesthetic properties of the representations that are produced in communicating meaning.

The relevance of looking at these social processes in digital heritage is confirmed by the interview data because rather than just looking at the artifacts being contributed and shared through their portals, there is much more discursive interpretation about the motivations, inspirations, and influences that produce meaning for those participating through a variety of modalities. According to Sullivan (2005), insights can be drawn from lived experience, subjectivity, and memory as agents in knowledge construction, illustrating the importance of considering what both practitioners and participants are encountering and bringing to their social interactions in these digital spaces. That is why letting heritage practitioners and participants describe their own meaning from their interactive practices with multimodal platforms and social media applications allows for a



much richer, deeper understanding of how and why they share and participate. This is also true of art practice and agency, which looks at patterns of behavior and activity, as well as emphasizes agency, intention, and causation for how meaning is made vivid by those involved and what influenced them from their surroundings. Combined, these theoretical frameworks prove useful in explaining the performative elements of interpretation and sharing content, particularly in what it means to heritage practitioners and participants.

Overall, the data corroborate my expectation that multimodal platforms and social media applications are having an effect on cultural heritage and our memory practices. However, I am surprised by the degree and complexity to which these effects are being considered and realized in the heritage community. My assumption that our digital activities, interaction, and participation constitute new forms of memory practices appears to be confirmed in this study's data. Realizing that this activity also constitutes the connections that coalesce into platformed communities of memory comes as a bit more startling. I believe this surprising turn definitely requires more consideration for future inquiry and articulation. Lastly, it was not until the analysis stage of this study that I became fully aware of the potential that metadata should be considered as additional forms of memory and that every trace of social media output and digital activity holds the same potential as other artifacts for being forms of cultural heritage and legitimate social records. These propositions also deserve more investigation.

## **LIMITATIONS**

As with any dissertation project, it is necessary to recognize the limitations of

the research. The primary limitations to this study that must be considered were the positionality and biases of this researcher. My rationale for choosing a qualitative research design squarely positioned me as the arbiter of analysis and interpretation. By what I chose to focus on, favor, include, or omit, I made a series of decisions in favor of the narrow scope of this dissertation, which imbued this dissertation with my own guided structure, interpretations, and conclusions. As such, reflexivity is an issue and researchers in this type of qualitative study must consider and clearly state their potential role, biases, influence, and perspective, as situated within the research.

In my case, as a former history teacher, I have a certain understanding of the historiographic process and have an affinity for certain types of historical analysis and explanation. Such understanding and affinity could influence my interpretations or explanations of significance rather than simply let certain meanings or dominant readings emerge.

Similarly, the interview responses were entirely self-reported, which present strong perspectives that are both useful for this research and have the potential to reveal certain assumptions about the discursive construction that are distinct to the interviewee. This could be considered a strength as well as a limiting factor of the data. However, it is hoped that the participant observations also provide some balance to the self-reporting of participants.

The timeline for the completion of this dissertation also presented some limitations to the research in that the gathering of data was constrained by events that happened during data collection and the availability of subjects during the

times I had between the academic terms in which I was teaching courses. One practical reality constraining the findings of this research would have to be the smaller than expected sample size. This study would likely have benefited from a greater diversity in sites and respondents, particularly in regards to digital participants. With more time and broader parameters, I would have been better able to recruit more respondents and extend my focus to a broader variety of heritage institutions and multimodal heritage platforms.

As a result, less instructive for this research is the social theory approach of social-network theory. Given the limitations of identifying outside participants through the various platforms, I am unable to determine and trace the complete strands of who is in charge of the channels and contributing the most materials within digital heritage platforms, as well as how the institutional structure of the site itself shapes, promotes, or inhibits the operators and users through the interactive process. Many of the respondents provided insight to these processes but further analysis is necessary to adequately explain the extent of these social structures.

However, the weakness most commonly attributed to these types of qualitative research methods is that they cannot be verified, proven, or validated through the scientific method, as they require subjective interpretation and explanation. It must also be considered that findings in these types of studies are sometimes given diminished status because they are relative and particularistic and cannot be generalized in a more expansive context. Some might also view the methods of interviewing, participant observations, and discursive analysis as

representing another form of limitation. The self-disclosure of responses and positionality of this researcher opens the door for questions about the reflexive and subjective nature of the findings. It could certainly be argued that further observation of digital practices through an experimental design would reveal another level of insight into this subject. However, that was not the purposes of this study. The purpose was to initiate a discussion with those most directly affected by the use of these multimodal platforms in digital heritage to find out how they felt about their digital practices and what it means to them.

That is why despite the limited size and scope of the study sample, I am satisfied with the diversity of perspectives that were achieved through the in-depth interviews and limited participant observations. I have also been systematic in applying the research methods, and I believe that by choosing to study three institutions and an assembly of practitioners and participants, the findings represent a variety of perspectives and activities, thus strengthening the conclusions I draw from my analyses.

My initial expectation for this research was that multimodal platforms are indeed transforming the authoritative roles of heritage practitioners and the participatory roles of the public in digital cultural heritage. I also envisioned that a shift is occurring in terms of what types of artifacts are now being privileged in cultural heritage collections in selection, preservation, and exhibition. However, most telling was how the interactive, participatory, and multimodal aspect of these platforms revealed new facets to the articulation of memory practices in the digital environment. I am convinced that this topic is worth more exploration as we

continue to alter the ways in which we generate, participate, and share our experiences through digital media and platforms.

I did not attempt to produce a metanarrative but rather to introduce an overlooked concept as being in need of further review. I strongly believe that the findings of this research are applicable to any organization, not just those in the field of cultural heritage, which uses digital interfaces and multimodal platforms to position the public as more active and participatory producers of meaning in the construction of collective memory. If we are to better understand the processes by which the public can use these platforms to articulate multimodal memory practices, we may in fact gain more insight into the long-term effects of what all of this digital cultural production might mean for any field that considers how we can document, examine, and interpret our shared pasts. Put another way, if we can better understand what type of cultural value and meaning are attributed to multimodal memory practices, then perhaps institutions using these digital portals and platforms might be able to construct their initiatives to more effectively serve future scholars with better understanding of how we are making memories today.

However, it needs to be reiterated that this is only initiating a conversation about a complex, evolving issue. To further broaden our understanding of how memories are being shared in a digital environment, I make several recommendations in the subsequent section about how to expand the lens of inquiry to more examples of heritage platforms and wider scope of social media use/practices.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the choices I made for this study were only the beginning. For one thing, the selection of the Getty Research Institute, the Prelinger Library and Archive, and the Willamette Heritage Center are just three examples of the vastly expanding field of digital heritage. More and more heritage institutions of varying size, scope, and purpose are looking to expand their digital agendas and embrace multimodal platforms in new and innovative ways. This expansion will require additional scrutiny and more investigation as multimodal heritage platforms continue to reshape the ways we interact with digital forms of cultural production to experience our shared pasts. Some of my own research goals look to continue where I've left off here, as I plan to explore more versions and uses of multimodal heritage platforms as they become available and tread new territory.

Additionally, this concept of multimodal memory practices is not confined to cultural heritage initiatives. Our use of multimodal platforms and social media applications for social documentation and media sharing has become so integrated into our daily routines that it would be equally worthy to investigate the principles of multimodal memory practices on a broader scale. If we are to shift away from our concepts of collective memory being produced through collective viewing of legacy media broadcasts and think more of interacting with digital content as producing platformed communities of memory, then we can direct our lens of inquiry to our own everyday practices. What might be revealed if we were to ask people how they interact with digital content through the social media in their normal routines and what it means to them as a memory practice, not just in cultural heritage but on a

much broader, quotidian scale?

The residual imprints of multimodal memory practices also provide another insight that calls for further investigation, what I call *multimodal memory curation*. This refers to the ways in which we organize, label, collect, and share our own digital resources, bookmarks, links, etc. My initial conceptualization is that this is a specific form of multimodal memory practice that involves choices and organizational practices that are based on and reflect our own interests, which also inform our interpretive processes and paths of memory by how and what we choose to organize. While this study only peripherally touches on this concept, I plan to further investigate the reasons and meaning behind individual's choices for how and why they organize the digital content they want to remember.

Another area worthy of additional study would be to more closely examine these multimodal memory practices through a more experimental design. While this study analyzes discursive interpretations and observes some behavioral and social practices, creating an experiment that would actually track and monitor these social practices more closely would also further enhance our understanding of how people are indeed interacting with content and platforms. Such an experimental design could also validate the extent, accuracy, or longevity of memory through such interactions. Additionally, this could be done in conjunction with a neurobiological study design that also examines the physiological or neurological responses to certain digital content or practices. Another recommended approach would be to trace a specific mediated event as it is shared across various platforms to see the lengths to which extends, further informing the scale and scope of platformed

communities of memory.

Thus, by broadening the scope of inquiry to look at how and why people as a matter of routine interact with multimodal media content on their smartphones, tablets, and laptops as a memory practice; in conjunction with examining how and why people collect and organize their digital resources in particular ways; as well as investigating the physiological or neurological responses to digital content and practices; or by combining with an experimental tracking study and following the trail of specific content – a clearer picture would likely emerge about our own position in the future articulations for how we collectively share and remember the past.

#### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The show was over.

Along with the rest of the capacity crowd, I exited the Internet Archive with images of the past swirling in my head like visions of shared memory. It was the second screening of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* series I had seen in as many days.

The night before had been shared with more than 1,400 other people at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. This night's show had been a fundraiser for the Internet Archive, following a devastating fire that destroyed some of the archive's facilities and equipment a month before. Both crowds had ranged in age, gender, class, and ethnicity, and each had been vocally raucous with their participation in providing a soundtrack of memory. Both occasions had been recorded and made available for future repurposing.



As I left the ornate building behind in the fog of that December night, I wondered what would become of my memory of the event. Not in terms of whether I would remember the occasion. I wondered instead about how it might be viewed online by someone who hadn't been there. I wondered if it would be widely shared beyond the crowd who had been there in attendance. I wondered if someone would repurpose the footage and change my memory of what I had just witnessed and participated in as a shared experience.

Of course, isn't that the case with everything that is shared online, across multimodal platforms, and through social media applications? Every bit of digital content we interact with is another person's memory...just by virtue of the fact that someone already created it, recorded it, uploaded it, shared it, or repurposed it. We are simply refreshing or revisiting something that already occurred. In this way, every person who subsequently interacts with that content is then participating in a multimodal memory practice that is shared in a platformed community of memory.

Such thoughts were pronounced for me as I was in the process of writing this dissertation about the implications of digital, social media on our memory practices. What I had come to realize over the course of my research is that I was not the only one wondering about this. Throughout my travels in 2013, I had many conversations with people whose eyes did not glaze over when I described my research. Actually, quite the contrary, those conversations led to many lively discussions. Not only in cultural heritage institutions but also on planes, in coffee shops, and anywhere else I had the chance to talk about what I was doing as a doctoral candidate in the final stretches of a Ph.D. program. It became apparent to

me that there are a lot of people out there who are interested in the past and are questioning what all of this multimodal, social media activity is doing to our memories...what will become of all this digital stuff?

So I have argued here that we need to look just as closely at how we are interacting with this digital material as the digital material itself. I am convinced that these multimodal memory practices represent our latest expression of social documentation. I am simply trying to put a name on a phenomenon that we are all aware of on some level. Given the scale and scope of these networked social platforms, it seems we are determined to document and share more of our experience than was ever before possible. However, many of us are curious what we will eventually do with all of this digital experience and how it will inform our shared pasts.

For me, this initial conversation is only the beginning. I think there is more to investigate and I plan to continue this questioning throughout my academic career and beyond. There is no way to know for certain how we will view the past through these digital platforms and practices but, for now, I am fairly certain that they will continue to shape the future of our remembering.

## APPENDIX A

### INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

first name last name:

address 1:

address 2:

date:

Dear full name:

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Oregon, working on a dissertation based on the effects of participatory media applications, platforms, and social networks on cultural heritage and collective memory.

As a communications scholar and former history teacher, I am interested in exploring how participatory media are affecting the ways the public engages in digital practices of remembering. Specifically, I want to learn how people are interacting with cultural heritage collections, how these practices might affect the role of cultural heritage curators, and how these social practices influence collective memory. I am interested in talking with you about your experiences and perspectives regarding this topic, which will add to generalizable knowledge on the specific question of how multimodal platforms in digital cultural heritage are impacting the construction of collective memory practices.

I hope to interview up to 30 cultural heritage professionals, volunteers, and contributors from three cultural heritage collections and archives. I anticipate conducting 1-2 interviews with each participant that last approximately one hour. Part of the process may include both audio and/or video recording of interviews, depending on your preference. You will also be given the opportunity to receive your completed transcripts for review in either a printed version or as a PDF file.

I am conducting this research throughout the summer and fall, and I anticipate completing my dissertation by May 2014.

I would like to thank you in advance for considering being a part of this process. If you have any questions, or would like to arrange to do an interview, please feel free to contact me by email at [bburkey@uoregon.edu](mailto:bburkey@uoregon.edu) or by phone at 562-818-3504.

Thank you again for considering participating in this project.

Sincerely,

Brant Burkey

Doctoral Candidate, School of Journalism & Communication, University of Oregon

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Brant Burkey from the University of Oregon School of Journalism & Communication.

I hope to gather information through interviews and participant observations with select members of the cultural heritage community, including both professionals and contributing members of the public. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your expertise, role, and participation with cultural heritage activities.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be part of a recorded interview about your perspective or the videotaped session of a participant observation that informs the ways in which participatory media platforms affect cultural heritage and collective memory. However, in choosing to participate in this study, you do have the option to decline to be recorded or videotaped, if that is your preference. In either case, your participation will help to add to the body of knowledge about this complex subject.

By agreeing to participate in an interview, you also have the option to agree to the release of your name and other identifying factors, such as the location of your employment or your contributing role with one of the institutions under study, or provisions can be made for participant and data confidentiality, including the assignment of pseudonyms, if requests for privacy are made.

You will also have the opportunity to review and edit the transcripts of your interviews prior to publication. Upon completion of this review, details from the scheduled interviews and participant observations will be included in a narrative account informing my dissertation research regarding the effects of participatory media platforms on cultural heritage archives and memory practices.

For security purposes, the physical data (transcripts) will be stored in a locked file and the digital data (e.g., emails, video, photographs, and audio recordings) will be stored in a password-protected computer with firewalls and virus detection. All recordings will only be used for the purposes of this dissertation research and will be accessible only by the researcher, his advisor, and university officials. Once this dissertation research is complete, all data, including audio and visual recordings, will be destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary and your responses can be discontinued or withdrawn at any time during the data gathering stage of this dissertation research. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the cultural heritage institution under study. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

You have been given two copies of this form – one to keep for your own records and one to return to the researcher with your signatures of consent. Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

*I am consenting to a recorded audio interview:*

Signature of Interviewee:

Date:

Name (printed):

*I am consenting to a videotaped participant observation:*

Signature of Interviewee:

Date:

Name (printed):

Lastly, please indicate if you would prefer to disclose your identity or have a pseudonym assigned:

*I consent to the disclosure of my identity.*

Signature:

Date:

Name (printed):

*I consent to have a pseudonym assigned.*

Signature:

Date:

Name (printed):

**Please return either a signed hard copy of this consent form or a digital copy with an electronic signature to the following mail or email address:**

**Brant Burkey**  
**251 W. Broadway, #173**  
**Eugene, OR 97401**  
**or**  
**[bburkey@uoregon.edu](mailto:bburkey@uoregon.edu)**

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact Brant Burkey, School of Journalism & Communication, 1275 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1275, 562-818-3504; or Professor Julie Newton, School of Journalism & Communication, 1275 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1275, [jhnewton@uoregon.edu](mailto:jhnewton@uoregon.edu). If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

**APPENDIX C**  
**TRANSCRIPT COVER LETTER**

first name last name  
address 1  
date

Dear first name:

First, thank you for participating in this dissertation research project. I have interviewed more than 30 participants in connection with this project, and your perspectives will help media scholars to better understand the effects of participatory media on cultural heritage and collective memory in a multimodal context.

Attached is the transcript of your interview. I have included two copies: one for you to edit and return to me, and the second for you to keep for your files. I want to represent your comments as accurately as possible.

While editing, I ask that you not "clean up" your comments and responses too much. This is a transcript of a conversation, and so it's important to keep some of those "markers" of conversation.

Please do correct any major errors that you may have made in conversation. There may be a couple of places that I've marked with a ? or with sp? Please review those spots and correct as necessary. If there are certain elements you would like to remove, I understand and will be responsive to such requests. Also, please let me know if you would like to change something completely, or if you want to add an explanatory note to the transcript.

Please return the edited transcript and any releases in the stamped envelope. I am currently writing the dissertation, so I would greatly appreciate your returning the edited transcript as quickly as possible.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to e-mail or call. Thank you again for participating!

Best Regards,

Brant Burkey  
Ph.D. Candidate & Graduate Teaching Fellow  
Email: bburkey@uoregon.edu  
Cell: 562-818-3504

## REFERENCES CITED

- Addison, A. C. (2007). Safeguarding heritage's endangered digital record. *New heritage: new media and cultural heritage*, 27-39.
- Affleck, J., & Kvan, T. (2007). Discursive interpretation of cultural heritage through new media. *New heritage: new media and cultural heritage*, 92-111.
- Ahmad, Y. (2006). The Scope and Definition of Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 12(3), 292-300.
- Althusser, L. (2006). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation). *The anthropology of the state: A reader*, 86-111.
- Aronson, J. (1994). A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 2(1), 1-3.
- Assman, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity. *New German Critique*, 69, 125-133.
- Baer, A. (2001). Consuming history and memory through mass media products. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(4), 491-501.
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. (P. Foss, P. Patton, & a. P. Beitchman, Trans.) New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Bearman, D. & Geber, K. (2008). Transforming cultural heritage institutions through new media. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 23(4), 385-399.
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of knowledge: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Brennen, B. & Hardt, H. (1999). *Picturing the Past: Media, History and Photography*, Urbana and Chicago; University of Illinois Press.
- Brockmeier, J. (2010). After the Archive: Remapping Memory. *Culture Psychology*, 16(1), 5-35.
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2009). *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cameron, F. (2007). The case of digital heritage collections. *New Heritage: new media and cultural heritage*, 170-184.
- Cameron, F., & Kenderdine, S. (2007) *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Carbone, N. (2012). *Top 10 Viral Videos: Kony 2012*. Time.com.  
<http://entertainment.time.com/2012/12/04/top-10-arts-lists/slide/kony-2012/>  
 Retrieved Oct. 16, 2013.
- Carnaby, P. (2009). Citizen-created content, digital equity and the preservation of community memory. *75th IFLA General Conference and Council* (pp. 1-10). Milan: World Library and Information Congress.
- Champion, E. (2007). Explorative shadow realms of uncertain histories. *New Heritage: new media and cultural heritage*, 185-206.
- Crownshaw, R., Kilby, J. & Rowland, A. (eds) (2010) *The Future of Memory*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Dalbello, M. (2009). "Digital Cultural Heritage: Concepts, Projects, and Emerging Constructions of Heritage." Proceedings of the Libraries in the Digital Age (LIDA) conference, 25-30 May, 2009.
- Dayan, D. & Katz, E. (1992). *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. London, England: Harvard University Press.
- De Lusagnet, Y. (2002). *Digital Heritage for the future*, a discussion paper commissioned by UNESCO for the European Commission on Preservation and Access, 15-27.
- Dijck, J.v. (2006). Record and hold: popular music between personal and collective memory. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23(5), 357-374.
- Dijck, J.v. (2007). *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dijck, J. v. (2008). Future Memories: The Construction of Cinematic Hindsight. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(3), 71-87.
- Dijck, J.v. (2008). Digital photography: communication, identity, and memory. *Visual Communication*, 7(1), 57-76.
- Dijck, J.v. (2011). Flickr and the culture of connectivity: Sharing views, experiences, memories. *Memory Studies*, 4(4), 401-415.
- Dijck, J.v. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dijk, J.v. (2012). *The Network Society*. London: SAGE.



- Doueih, M. (2011). *Digital Cultures*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Dougherty, M., & van den Heuvel, C. (2009). Historical Infrastructures for Web Archiving: Annotation of Ephemeral Collections for Researchers and Cultural Heritage Institutions. In *Massachusetts Institute of Technology 6<sup>th</sup> Media in Transition conference, Cambridge, Massachusetts*.
- Erll, A., & Nunning, A. (2008) *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Erll, A., & Rigney, A. (2009). *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Erll, A. (2011). *Memory in Culture*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Falci, C. H. (2011). *Metadata and new architecture of memory in programmable environments*. Retrieved 5 15, 2011, from <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/falcidmpaper.pdf>
- Fogu, C. (2009). Digitalizing Historical Consciousness. *History and Theory*, 4, 103-121.
- Garde-Hansen, J., Hoskins, A., and Reading, A. (eds) (2009). *Save As...Digital Memories*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Gehl, R. (2009). YouTube as archive: Who will curate this digital Wunderkammer? *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(1), 43-60.
- Geil, A., & Rabinovitz, L. (2004). *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Giaccardi, E. (ed) (2012) *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*. London: Routledge.
- Giaccardi, E. (2012). "Introduction: Reframing heritage in a participatory culture." *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*, 1-10.
- Gitelman, L. (2006). *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1999). *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Electric Book Company Ltd: London.
- Grange, P. (2003). *Memory and popular film*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

- Greenfield-Gilat, Y. (2007). New media components and cultural heritage sites management, in the Jewish traditional society. *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*, 53-66.
- Grusin, R. (2009). YouTube at the End of New Media. *The YouTube Reader*, 60-67.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT press.
- Halbwachs, M. (1980 [1950]). *On Collective Memory*. Translated into English in 1980 by F.J. Ditter and V.Y. Ditter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hartley, J. (2008). YouTube, digital literacy and the growth of knowledge. *Media, Communication and Humanity Conference*, (pp. 1-17). London.
- Haskins, E. (2007). Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 37, 401-422.
- Hemsley, J., Cappelini, V. & Stanke, G. (eds) (2005) *Digital Applications for Cultural and Heritage Institutions*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*. Stanford University Press.
- Hoskins, A. (2009). The digital distribution of memory. Retrieved 6 2, 2011, from <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/hoskinspaper.pdf>
- Hoskins, A. (2010). New memory. *Vision, Memory and Media*, published to coincide with the exhibition, *Persistence of Vision* (FACT/Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center), 72-82.
- Hume, J. (2010). Memory Matters: The Evolution of Scholarship in Collective Memory and Mass Communication. *The Review of Communication*, 10(3), 181-196.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jones-Garmil, K. (ed) (1997) *The Wired Museum: Emerging Technology and Changing Paradigms*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums.
- Kalay, Y., Kvan, T., & Affleck, J. (eds) (2008). *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*. New York: Routledge.

Kalnikaite, V., & San Pedro, J. (2008). VidiWeb: Utilizing Mobile Video and Social Summarization to Augment Human Memory. *MobileHCI* (pp. 1-4). Amsterdam: ACM.

Kansteiner, W. (2002). Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies. *History and Theory*, 41, 179-197.

Kellner, D. (1995). *Media Culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Klaebe, H.G., & Burgess, J.E. (2008). *Co-creating heritage: Innovative uses of oral history and life narrative in Australian libraries*.

Labrador, A. and Chilton, E. (2009). Re-locating Meaning in Heritage Archives: A Call for Participatory Heritage Databases. *Computer Applications to Archaeology*, 1-9.

Lange, P. (2009). Videos of Affinity on YouTube. *The YouTube Reader*, 70-88.

Liu, S. B. (2010). The Emerging Ethics of Studying Social Media Use with a Heritage Twist (workshop). *Revisiting Research Ethics in the Facebook Era: Challenges in Emerging CSCW Research*, The ACM Conference, Savannah, Georgia, US, [http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~yardi/ethicscscw2010\\_files/AcceptedPapers.htm](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~yardi/ethicscscw2010_files/AcceptedPapers.htm) (accessed on 10/01/2011).

Liu, S. B. (2010). Grassroots heritage in the crisis context: a social media probes approach to studying heritage in a participatory age. In *CHI'10 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2975-2978). ACM.

Lynch, C. (2002). Digital Collections, Digital Libraries and the Digitization of Cultural Heritage Information. *First Monday*, 7(5-6), 1-12.

Malkki, L. H. (1997). News and culture: Transitory phenomena and the fieldwork tradition. *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science*, 86-101.

Malpas, J. (2008). Cultural heritage in the age of new media. *New heritage: new media and cultural heritage*, 13-26.

Monaci, S., & Tirocchi, S. (2010). Eternal present of the spotless mind - Youth, memory and participatory media. *ESA Research Network Sociology of Culture Midterm Conference: Culture and the Making of Worlds, 2010*. (pp. 1-10). Social Science Research Network.

Morris-Suzuki, T. (2005). *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*. London: Verso.

Multisilta, J., & Milrad, M. (2009). Sharing Experience with Social Mobile Media.

*Mobile HCI09*, (pp. 1-3). Bonn.

Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 7-24.

Parry, R. (2007). *Recoding the Museum: Digital Heritage and the Technologies of Change*. London: Routledge.

Parry, R. (ed) (2010). *Museums in a Digital Age*. London: Routledge.

Pentzold, C., & Sommer, V. (2011). Digital networked media and social memory. Theoretical foundations and implications. *Aurora*, 10, 72-85.

Roberts, C. (2005). Gatekeeping theory: An evolution. *Annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication*. San Antonio, Texas.

Russo, A. (2011). Transformations in cultural communications: Social media, cultural exchange, and creative connections. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 54(3), 327-346.

Russo, A. (2012). The rise of the 'media museum': Creating interactive cultural experiences through social media. *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*, 145-157.

Russo, A., Watkins, J., Kelly, L. and Chan, S. (2007). Social media and cultural interactive experiences in museums. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 1, 19-29.

Russo, A. Watkins, J., Kelly, L., & Chan, S. (2008). Participatory communication with social media. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 51(1), 21-31.

Sa, A. (2009). Can Web 2.0 shape meta-memory? *Critical Issues*, 51-62.

Sak, S. (2011). Collective Memory and Video-Sharing on the Internet. *Image, Time and Motion - Theory on Demand: New Media Critique from Turkey, Ankara (2003-2010)*, 7, 94-103.

Savoie, H. (2010). Memory Work in the Digital Age: Exploring the Boundary Between Universal and Particular Memory Online. *Global Media Journal*, 9(16), 1-22.

Silberman, N. (2007). The quest for "essence" in digital heritage. *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*, 81-91.

Silberman, N., & Purser, M. (2012). Collective memory as affirmation: People-centered cultural heritage in a digital age. *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*, 13-29.

- Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz: MUSEUM 2.0.
- Simon, R.I. (2012). Remembering together: Social media and the formation of the historical present. *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture*, 89-106.
- Smith, T. (2009). The social media revolution. *International Journal of Market Research* , 51(4), 559-561.
- Soukup, C. (2010). I Love the 80s: The Pleasures of a Postmodern History. *Southern Communication Journal* , 75(1), 76-93.
- Sporrel, I. (2010). Photographs of the Great Depression: Dorothea Lange's Invention of American Cultural Memory. Thesis. Rijksuniversiteit, Groningen.
- Stiegler, B. (2009). The Carnival of the New Screen: From Hegemony to Isonomy. *The YouTube Reader*, 40-59.
- Talja, S. (1999). Analyzing qualitative interview data: The discourse analytic method. *Library & Information Science Research*, 21 (4), 459-477.
- Tan, B.K. and Rahaman, H. (2009). Virtual Heritage: reality and criticism. *Joining Languages Cultures and Visions: CAADFutures*, 143-156.
- Terras, M. (2010). Digital curiosities: resource creation via amateur digitization. *Literary and linguistic computing*, 25(4), 425-438.
- Uricchio, W. (2009). The Future of a Medium Once Known as Television. *The YouTube Reader*, 24-39.
- Walsh, K. (1992) *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*. London: Routledge.
- Walsh, P. (2010). Rise and Fall of the Post-Photographic Museum: Technology and the Transformation of Art. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Warburg, A. (1999). *The renewal of pagan antiquity: contributions to the cultural history of the European Renaissance*. Getty Publications.
- Weber, M. (1949). *The Methodology of the Social Sciences:(by) Max Weber. Translated and Edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch with a Foreword by Edward A. Shils. E. A. Shils, & H. A. Finch (Eds.). Free Press.*