

# **I Know it's Important, But What Am I Looking at? Strategies for using Blog Content to Contextualize YouTube Videos**

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**Abstract:** Archivists have long recognized that item-level description is not viable for most collections of primary sources, and have instead focused on documenting aggregate-level units within which records were organized by their creators. The VidArch project is capturing YouTube videos associated with the 2008 U.S. presidential election, as well as exploring strategies for appraising and describing them. The impact of YouTube videos on public perception and election outcomes is likely to be significant. Unfortunately, their "origin order" often provides very limited contextual information that will be essential for users to make sense of them in the future (e.g. creators, events and individuals represented, how they were interpreted by citizens at the time). Blogs are also an important source for documenting online deliberations. Archivists can collect blogs directly, but there is also great potential to tap blogs as sources of documentation about the "story behind" YouTube videos, both through the text they present and through links that they provide to other sources (serving as "contextual information bridges"). We have been exploring and testing ways to systematically collect blog entries related to given sets of YouTube videos. The harvesting of contextual information from external sources will become increasingly important for archivists as (1) items in environments such as YouTube play a significant role in phenomena that should be documented, and (2) the environments themselves provide limited contextual information. We will report on approaches to support what Hans Booms would call a "documentation plan" for reflecting the conversation space surrounding contemporary events.

## **About the author:**

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