‘Where the Wild Things Are’:
Community Records on the Web

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	COMMUNITIES	SCHOLARS	ARCHIVES

Research	Transnational communities: diasporic, ethnic, racial, or subaltern
	• Today individuals use the Web to
	  • communicate with community members (family or not)
	  • express affinity with various groupings (circumstantial)
	  • emphasize distinctiveness (ideology, religion, culture)
		New records require new, computational methods
		• Web resources though not readily used as primary sources in history
		  • Dynamic nature and sheer amount of material
		  • Obsolescence of platforms and degradation of electronic objects
		  • Lack of user-friendly interfaces
			The archival angst to archive the Web and its challenges
			• ‘Data trash’ or records?
			  • Pre-custodial approach in appraisal
			  • Preservation, curation, and contextualization
			  • Provision of navigation and access for users

Records	• They produce ‘big data’ on web platforms=new ephemera of our age	Beyond the item, the network (of people, records, and interactions)	Networked records need cross-repository linking, and sophisticated access

Challenges	Pervasive web resources
	  • Exacerbate dispersion of primary sources in community research
	  • Are computationally malleable=ease of access/use to researchers
	  • Quantifiable ‘big data’ can seem more “authoritative”
		• Historical research today has to
		  • Span borders and institutions
		  • Balance the online and “offline”
		  • Integrate LAM holdings with community ‘big data’ on the Web
			• Scholars question archival appraisal
			  • Selective in nature
			  • Does not foresee, or accommodate future users and their needs
			  • Promotes collecting biases in existing collections

CASE STUDY

SAMPLE*: *Institutions selected purposefully for maximum variation

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS — American Jewish Historical Society
- Established 1892
- New York City, NY
- Presently, no web archiving

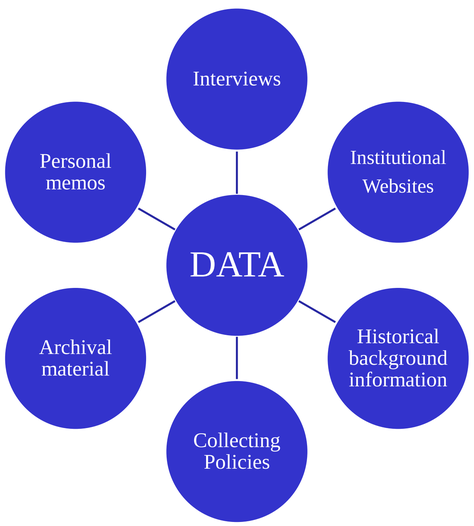
Arab American National Museum / المتحف العربي الأمريكي
- Founded 2005
- Dearborn, MI
- Web archiving: thematic collections

Minnesota 2.0 — Immigration History Research Center
- IHRC established in 1965
- Minnesota 2.0 project, 2009
- Minneapolis, MN
- Web archiving: screenshots, PDFs

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do web resources affect the notion of ‘recordness’ in the context of ethnic archives?
- What strategies do ethnic institutions in the US employ in order to collect, preserve, and curate web resources by their communities?
- What are the barriers to, and enablers of, this process?

DATA COLLECTION



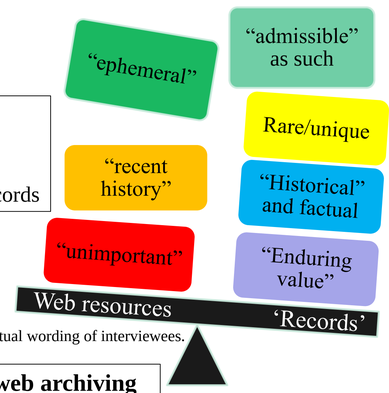
DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative Content Analysis	• Collecting policies • Mission statements • Interview transcripts
Emergent coding	• Coding methods: • descriptive, process, value, versus and in vivo
Coding stages	• Initial ➔ axial ➔ theoretical • Codeweaving ➔ analytic narrative ➔ theory building

SELECT FINDINGS

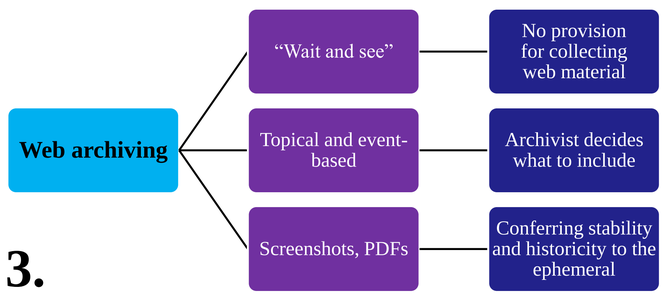
1.

‘Recordness’ concept
- Underlies archivists’ decision mechanism
- Guides appraisal
- Affects acquisition/access to community records



2.

Divergent institutional approaches for web archiving
- Deciding how to circumscribe web resources as records
- Defining the place of these records in their holdings.



3.

Tensions at play
- The archives as a controlling mechanism,
  vs. as enabling and facilitating new scholarly practices
- Web archiving as a means to enhance existing collections
  vs. allowing multiple identities and unexpected uses of resources
- Value in volume of data that can be computationally analyzed,
  vs. value in scarcity and uniqueness
- Costly and time-consuming pre-custodial intervention by the archivist
  vs. including scholarly communities in a critical curation cycle
- The ethnic institution as representing the community
  vs. the rise of the individual articulating multiple belongings