



Documenting the American Experience in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars

Society of American Archivists
2012 Research Forum
San Diego August 7, 2012

Heather Soyka University of Pittsburgh
Eliot Wilczek Simmons College & Tufts University

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

2011 SAA Research Forum

1. What are the unique documentary challenges of these wars?
2. What archival institutions and capacities are needed to document these wars?
3. Could archives apply lessons from documenting these wars to other work?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

2012 SAA Research Forum

Scope

Documenting American military communities' experience in Iraq & Afghanistan Wars.

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

2012 SAA Research Forum

Scope

Documenting American military communities' experience in Iraq & Afghanistan Wars.

Documentary Challenges

1.Small Wars

2.Big Data

3.War by Other Hard-to-Document Means

4.Social Media

5.Societal Isolation

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

2012 SAA Research Forum

Scope

Documenting American military communities' experience in Iraq & Afghanistan Wars.

Documentary Challenges

1.Small Wars

2.Big Data

3.War by Other Hard-to-Document Means

4.Social Media

5.Societal Isolation

Research Goal

Agenda setting

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Small Wars



Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of Counterinsurgency Warfare

Definition

DoD “Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.”

Ambiguous

Difficult to measure

Population-centric

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Small Unit Center of Gravity

Operations

Iraq Surge

Corps

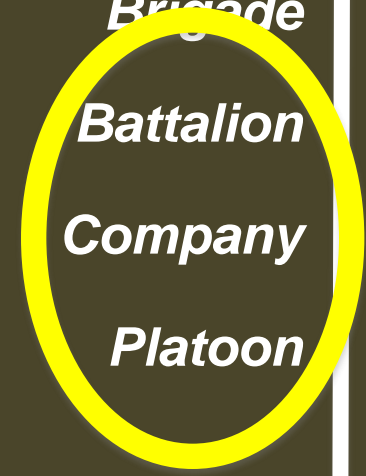
Division

Brigade

Battalion

Company

Platoon



Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Small Unit Center of Gravity

*Operational Reporting
&
Military History Doctrine*

Corps

Division

Brigade

Battalion

Company

Platoon

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Question

How to document small-unit warfare with large-unit documentation infrastructure?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Question

How to document small-unit warfare with large-unit documentation infrastructure?

Approaches

Contextually-driven reporting & locally-based analysis within chain of command

Macroappraisal & functional analysis

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Question

How to appraise small actions in a
geo-political context?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Big Data



Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of the US Military's Big Data

Characteristics

Intensive data gathering at all levels of command

Wide range of formats

Data gathering outpaces analysis

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of the US Military's Big Data

Examples

Joint headquarters
US Forces-Iraq

46 TB

50-60 million documents

Unmanned
Aerial
Vehicles

**65 simultaneous
image collecting points
24/7**

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Question

How to meaningfully document military experience out of this mass of data?

How to attach meaningful context to this mass of data?

How to preserve this mass of data?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Question

How to meaningfully document military experience out of this mass of data?

How to attach meaningful context to this mass of data?

How to preserve this mass of data?

Approaches

Highly structured organization

Strong warrants for records creation

Context-free grammars | Bill Underwood

Digital curation

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

[REDACTED]

War [REDACTED] by [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Other

Hard-to- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Document [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Means

[REDACTED]

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of These Other Means

Contractors

March 2011
Afghanistan
& Iraq

155,000 contractors

vs.

145,000 uniformed personnel

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of These Other Means

Contractors

March 2011
Afghanistan
& Iraq

155,000 contractors

vs.

145,000 uniformed personnel

Covert Operations

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of These Other Means

Contractors

March 2011
Afghanistan
& Iraq

155,000 contractors

vs.

145,000 uniformed personnel

Covert Operations

Counterinsurgency Approaches

Large
Footprint

Foreign
Internal
Defense

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

How to approach non-government records that document government policy?

How to document covert actions?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

How to approach non-government records that document government policy?

How to document covert actions?

Approaches

Classification reform

FOIA requests | National Security Archive

WikiLeaks

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Social Media



Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of Social Media in the Military

Connecting through Conversations

Blogs

Platoon Leader

Company Command

TIGRNET

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of Social Media in the Military

Connecting through Conversations

Blogs

Platoon Leader

Company Command

TIGRNET

Concerns

OPSEC

2005, 2007, 2010

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

What is the relationship between the military communities and the archives?

Who should capture these unofficial records?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

What is the relationship between the military communities and the archives?

Who should capture these unofficial records?

Approaches

Community archives

Shared authority, multiple creators/multiverse

Personal Information Management

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Societal Isolation



Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of Societal Isolation

Civilian-Military Gap

Men and women
served since 2001

~4,000,000

Percentage of US population
deployed on active duty
since 2001

0.5%

Service members surveyed believe
that the American public has little
or no understanding of the problems
that military families face

84%

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Nature of Societal Isolation

*Percent of total US population in armed services &
Number of Americans who served on active duty*

World War One 2.75% | 4.7 million

World War Two 8.75% | 16.1 million

Korean War 2.25% | 5.7 million

Vietnam War 1.75% | 8.7 million

Gulf War 0.75% | 2.2 million

Post-9/11 Wars 0.5% | ~4.0 million

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

What is the relationship between the military communities and the archives?

Who should capture these unofficial records?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Questions & Approaches

Questions

What is the relationship between the military communities and the archives?

Who should capture these unofficial records?

Approaches

Community archives

Shared custody, multiple creators/multiverse

Personal Information Management

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Conclusion

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Iraq & Afghanistan Wars present new appraisal challenges

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Iraq & Afghanistan Wars present new appraisal challenges

Deal with increasingly complex traces of evidence and access to mounting volume of data

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Iraq & Afghanistan Wars present new appraisal challenges

Deal with increasingly complex traces of evidence and access to mounting volume of data

Revisiting existing frameworks to meet demands of documentation that falls between the lines of unofficial & official

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

**War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means**

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Iraq & Afghanistan Wars present new appraisal challenges

Deal with increasingly complex traces of evidence and access to mounting volume of data

Revisiting existing frameworks to meet demands of documentation that falls between the lines of unofficial & official

Changing information flow is moving outside of official institutional function—how to document?

Introduction

Small Wars

Big Data

War by Other
Hard-to-Document
Means

Social Media

Societal Isolation

Conclusion

Photographs

Iraq
Staff Sgt. Dallas Edwards | June 16, 2007
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/761432580/>

**Title
Page**

Villagers of Mullayan
Spc. Kristina Truluck | January 1, 2009
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dvids/6325582173/>

**Small
Wars**

NCO Academy Teaches Leadership in Virtual Environment
US Army | February 10, 2009
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/3268871691/>

Big Data

Staying connected
US Army | December 28, 2009
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/4245046328/>

**Social
Media**

Flags in
US Army | May 26, 2011
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/soldiersmediacenter/5775951452/>

**Societal
Isolation**