



Digital archives, cultural heritage (and YOU users...)

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What 's up?



- **what is an archive** in a traditional or a digital environment?
- what does it mean **context** for cultural digital resources?
- digital apps create more or less context?
- archives and **invented archives** in digital world
- archival resources and **the rest of Cultural Heritage**
- the **role of users** for archives quality
- the **digital users** of archives
- some critical issues for digital archives **users satisfaction**
- an **happy end**: some good practices of archival YOUser interactions

What we mean exactly with *archives*?



- An **archive** refers to a collection of historical records, but also to the location in which these records are kept (Wikipedia) **Repository** is a place where things can be stored and maintained (SAA glossary)
- **Archives** are made up of records which have been accumulated over the course of an individual or organization's lifetime (The word archive is derived from the Greek ἀρχή (arkhē) meaning government or order (Wikipedia))
- **Archival bond**: The relationship that links each record to the previous and subsequent ones and to all those which participate in the same activity. It is originary (i.e. it comes into existence when a record is made or received and set aside), necessary (i.e. it exists for every record), and determined (i.e. it is characterized by the purpose of the record). It places a record in context and gives to it additional meaning (*InterPares* and SAA Glossary)
- **They are NOT** *a long-term storage area for backup copies or a file containing one or more files in compressed format* (ICT definitions)



So what are digital archives?

Archival contents in a digital environment are **descriptions, interpretations or reproductions** of archives

The word **archive** in the digital world is used more widely to call digital repositories, collections of digital objects, digital libraries, portals, inventories, lists of items or links... Selected group of objects without archival bonds among them.

Some examples from *Wikipedia*:

- The Digital Archive Project is an online collaboration that provides advice and support for individuals **interested publishing television programs** that are not produced or distributed through mainstream content distribution.
- European Digital Archive on Soil Maps is a digital **inventory of the maps** holding valuable information pertaining to soil
- The National Geospatial Digital Archive is an **archive of cartographic information** funded by the Library of Congress, University of California Santa Barbara, and Stanford University.

Context and digital resources



- The **archival physical order** normally keeps most of the bond among records
- In case of **digital-born records or digital objects/items** the bond must be ensured by **metadata**
- The metadata standards suggest the mandatory elements to describe digital objects in order to **manage, preserve, find, make searchable and findable** them.
- Thus, some bonds are granted, but in the global dimension of WWW other links are created:
digital/network environment creates new contexts



Archives and *invented* archives

The separation of single records/objects from their original context is easy in digital environments

So, items are put in an artificial context, the **invented archives**, and take another dimension, similar to that of *monuments*

This can be done for different purposes: education, exhibitions, cultural dissemination, scientific thesis, historical events

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/lcwa/html/sept11/sept11-overview.html>.

The maintaining of a minimum set of metadata is necessary to treat those documents as history sources

Otherwise, documents lose most of their original sense and can be used even as alibis to re-invent history as we like, like for

negationism: see the Institute for Historical Review <http://www.ihr.org/> or the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust <http://www.codoh.info/>



the CH sector: digital helps?



*A museum is distinguished by a **collection of often unique objects** that forms the core of its activities for exhibitions, education, research, etc. This differentiates it from an **archive** or **library**, where the contents may be more paper-based, replaceable and less exhibition oriented.*

(Wikipedia)

A **digital library** is a digital environment that keeps together collections, services, and people in support of the full life cycle of creation, dissemination, use, and preservation of cultural data, informations, and knowledge.

The issues to be taken in consideration to co-operate are:

- Museums, Archives and Libraries sometimes hold the same objects but treat them using different standards
- The connection among holdings is too important to be lost
- Cultural Heritage descriptions are not necessarily at item level, we must consider the connections/metadata at collections level too
- The item level must be considered especially for digital reproductions

the role of users for Archives quality



Archivists normally monitor the use of archives in order to plan new finding aids, new ways to grant access and physical management of records

Archives on-site users could be classified in **two families**:

- **users with a research plan (browsers)**
- they have to browse archives, they verify on documents their theories, they are good finding aids readers, are interested in archives creators, need to scroll finding aids, include and exclude search paths, can appreciate the lack of records as useful informations. They know that **archives need time**
- **users who look for specific records (searchers)**
- they have no theories, they want quick results and don't want to read complex finding aids, they love miraculous fishing tools, they have no time.

users and archivists



Archivists must govern the transition

- from the traditional way of giving public access to archives in on-site reference rooms, with the constant help of archivists:

individual - personalised - mediated - analogic - synchronous - flexible - sacerdotal

- to the new way, based on ICT and on international standards

asynchronous - interactive - faceless - anonymous - general - remote - automatic - secular

the profile



of digital archive use(r)s



- Digital user requirements include always the desire for accessible, reliable, comprehensible, rich, up-dated contents
- How to face the increasing use of **searching** instead of **browsing**, preserving the serendipity?
- Do we presume to know what digital archives users need (and how they behave, and what they are able to understand)?
- Are we sure they love just digital reproductions of ancient documents?

some critical issues for digital archives use(r)s



• Content/Language

- Archival descriptions use often a too technical language (referred to discipline or to administration history)
- The research utilities are limited to words in the title or to chronology

• Structure/Syntax

- Description structures (vertical and horizontal) are often too complex and non easily rendered
- Complexity is taken as a quality criteria...

• Domain of research

- Users often can't understand if what they seek is in the site, is somewhere else or doesn't exist at all...

An happy end: digital archives good YOUser interactions



What could be done:

(keeping the context informations of archival materials as primary):

- Being extremely clear on what you offer and how to use it
- Helping browsing the complexity according to different user requirements
- Offering links to your potential neighbours
- Providing training e-tools, thematic paths, references, widgets
- Collecting users experiences (see MICHAEL EU) and use data mining apps

..and daring more:

- Post-classificate historical archival descriptions
- Use semantic tagging to give additonal (and automatic) meaning to descriptions

An happy end: digital archives good YOUUser interactions



Some good examples:

- UK Public Record Office

<http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>,

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/teachers/kids.htm> and

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/teachers/>

- Australian *Vrooom* <http://vrroom.naa.gov.au/>

- Canadian Library and Archives *Flickr/YouTube Albums*

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/ireland/033001-3001-e.html>

- *Friul in prin* (<http://www.friulinprin.beniculturali.it/> italian archival-based genealogy site: users can ask services and add their family stories)

Good examples . .



Home page - Your Archives - Mozilla Firefox

http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Home_page

Your Archives beta version

article notes view source history Sign in or Register

search

Go Search

navigation

- Home page
- Sign in or register
- Create new page
- Browse categories
- New articles
- Recent changes
- Wanted pages
- Special pages
- Help

Toolbox

- What links here
- Feedback
- Complain about this page

the national archives

Home page

These pages are for you to contribute your knowledge of archival sources held by The National Archives and by other archives throughout the UK.

The content on these pages has mainly been contributed by users and is designed to offer information additional to that available in the Catalogue, Research Guides, Documents and the National Register of Archives. The National Archives does not vouch for the accuracy of the information held within Your Archives. If you would like to discuss technical or editorial issues, content and purpose of Your Archives please visit The Lobby.

First Time Users

- What can I do here?
- How to contribute
- How to register an account
- How to edit a page
- How to create a new page

Browse Content

- New articles
- Articles needing some housekeeping
- First World War
- Second World War
- Commonwealth and colonies
- Caribbean diaspora
- All categories
- Migration
- Maps
- Foreign affairs
- The National Archives
- Memoranda
- All categories

Featured Articles

- Cenotaph
- World War Two Artists
- War diary of POW Captain RD Wilkie, 1944 - 1945
- Field Marshall Richard Michael Power Carver
- Nurse Edith Cavell

Luftens' Cenotaph

National Archives of Australia - Vroom - Mozilla Firefox

http://vroom.naa.gov.au

canadian archives

National Archives of Austral...

La Repubblica.it » H...
BBC-unicm
IAS 2008 - OpenCo...
EVAMINERVA 2008 ...

Posta - Posta in arrivo (91) ...
Posta - Benvenuto a SPAMA...

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

virtual reading room

Easy access to archival records for teachers and students

What is Vroom?

- An ever-growing set of records from the National Archives collection
- For students and teachers learning to use archival records
- A tool for 20th-century Australian History, Civics & Citizenship and more - see [catalogue categories](#)
- Developed in partnership with The Learning Federation

Worth a look

- Simpson and his donkey - Gallipoli hero
- What is television? - new technology
- Australia - land of opportunity

Log in

Username: Password: Log in

Forgot your password?
Register

Explore

Take a tour

OR

Browse records via topics

Choose a topic

Refine topic?

Only find records with learning content?

OR

Search records by keyword / year

Search

Only find records with learning content?

Advanced search

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National Archives of Australia | © Commonwealth of Australia 2005

Library and Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Canada

Library and Archives Canada
www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

Franglais Home Contact Us Help Search canada.gc.ca

Introduction
Synopsis
Essays
Gallery
Flickr/YouTube Albums
Collective Memory
Integration
Law and Order
Literature
Migration
Rural Communities
Urban Communities

Music
Partner
Further Research
Copyright/Sources
Comments

The Shamrock and the Maple Leaf

Cultura Italiana
Cultura Italiana
Cultura Italiana

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is pleased to announce that a selection of digital images related to Irish-Canadian documentary heritage have been made available for the first time on Flickr.com, a popular photo-sharing community. As part of the pilot project, this November 2008 a number of video presentations will be added to YouTube.com, a popular video-sharing community. Both online communities allow for commenting, sharing, and tagging of content.

The objective of the project is to explore new ways to improve access to and increase interaction with Canada's documentary heritage. Library and Archives Canada is excited about the opportunities that social media-sharing communities provide for Canadians to discuss and contextualize an important selection of our collective history. Learn more about the project (@requentlyAskedQuestions).

- Visit the LAC Shamrock and the Maple Leaf geo-tagged image album at Flickr.com (www.flickr.com/photos/2985432@N02/)
- A link to the LAC video album at YouTube.com will be available at the end of November 2008.

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Top of Page Important Notices

FRUI in prin - Anagrafe Storica delle Famiglie Friulane - Mozilla Firefox

http://www.friulprin.benculturalari.it/

canadian archives

FRUI in prin - Anagrafe Storica delle Famiglie Friulane

Archivio di Stato di Udine

Italiano | Friulano | Inglese

Home | Contatti | Accessibilità | Mappa del sito

ASU

ANAGRAFE STORICA DELLE FAMIGLIE FRIULANE

FRUI in prin

ANAGRAFE STORICA DELLE FAMIGLIE FRIULANE

FRUI in prin
Accessi alla Banca Dati

FRUI in prin
Avanzamento Progetto

FRUI in prin
Territorio Friulano

Altre di immagini
Schede dei documenti anagrafici
Torne di storia
Quaderni di in prin

Aggiornamenti contenuti a cura della redazione del sito - Revisione data: 10/04/2008 - ultimo aggiornamento: Maggio 2008
ASUD - Archivio di Stato di Udine - Via F. Libera, 1 - 33100 Udine tel. 0432-477245 fax. 0432-546233 - glic@asud.it



Thank you for your attention!

any question?

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