From Ashes To Ashé: Memorializing Traumatic Events Through Participatory Digital Archives

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FROM ASHES TO ASHÉ: MEMORIALIZING TRAUMATIC EVENTS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DIGITAL ARCHIVES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

Traumatic, cataclysmic events, whether caused by man-made or natural forces, threaten the safety, stability, and resilience of a community or state. Additionally, massive media exposure given to documenting and providing information, place the media consumers at psychological risk. As an alternative to broadcast news reports, online memorials and disaster archives provide the public the means and central locations for witnessing catastrophic events, as well as collectively commemorating and mourning the tragic losses. According to psychological and ethnographic research, narrativizing the trauma through shared memories and artifacts of mourning produce multiple therapeutic benefits, including the likely development of cognitive awareness, empathy, and catharsis.

Complicating these benefits, however, are psychological risks of secondary trauma resulting from archiving and curating disaster collections, and the potential for economic and political exploitation. The participatory disaster archives are embedded in trauma culture, serving as public witnesses to survivors of trauma and reinforcing the medical, social, and civic infrastructures associated with a community’s recovery from and resilience to calamities. Ironically, the confluence of public archive/memorials with medical and other socio-technical institutions that facilitate recovery from crises, also contribute to trauma culture’s sustenance. This dissertation investigates the effects of digitally archiving and memorializing traumatic events through an interdisciplinary methodology of critical cultural studies and ethnography. I argue that participatory disaster archives may both mitigate psychological risks and augment social benefits through adopting protocols of best practice.
To my worldly, well-traveled mother, Patricia Donaldson, a career educator and bon vivant who provided a wealth of guidance and common sense for my academic pursuit; to my children, Timothy Kiley, Eva Behner, and Amy Napoles, who often asked apposite questions that sparked my own interest and helped fuel my creativity, they have my deepest love and appreciation for their encouragement; and to my loving and relentlessly artistic husband, Jim Carlton, whose books and many other published works provided the high literary standard that inspired me. He has my never-ending gratitude for assuming the majority of the housework.
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My academic journey was often daunting despite the compelling nature of the coursework and the provocative questions that studies of our texts and technologies raise. Fortunately, mentors and friends accompanied me on this passage and their scholarly guidance and steadfast support enabled me to complete my degree. This statement acknowledges my deepest gratitude to my peers and professors.

I would first like to express my profound gratitude and inestimable admiration for my committee, Professors Barry Mauer, Bruce Janz, Natalie Underberg-Goode, Jeffrey Bedwell, and my chair, Professor Mark L. Kamrath. I admire your respective areas of expertise, your publications, and your unflagging energy for continuing your research. Yet, your encouragement and relentless, albeit appreciated, suggestions to read more, think harder, and write with clarity, generated my confidence and determination to complete this dissertation. I am especially indebted to my chair, Mark, for introducing me to the world of digital archiving and for providing a laboratory for gaining knowledge from the ground up.

I would also like to acknowledge Patty Hurter, assistant director of the Texts and Technology Program, whose timely reminders, broad smile, and supportive personality never ceased to impress me and prod me forward to the finish.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

XXXVII. VOID.

Great streets of silence led away
To neighborhoods of pause;
Here was no notice, no dissent,
No universe, no laws.

By clocks ‘twas morning, and for night
The bells at distance called;
But epoch had no basis here,
For period exhaled.

—Emily Dickinson, Series 2 1891

Neighborhood of Pause: A 9/11 Story
On September 11, 2001, the eastern coast of the United States was awash in sunshine and mild temperatures afforded by a high-pressure system that provided the Al-Qaeda pilots’ perfect flying conditions. A description of this almost too-perfect weather at the beginning of many archived 9/11 personal accounts and oral histories establishes a collective past of pastoral innocence poised before the shattering events of that day. Ann Hoog, folklore specialist and

Ann exclaimed that the morning of September 11, 2001, was an exceptionally beautiful day; and one she wished she could take a holiday from work. When she learned of the first plane hitting one of the Twin Towers, she was surprised and concerned, initially assessing the strike as horrific and hoping it was accidental. Ann joined her co-workers huddled around a small, desktop TV, and watched the replays until they decided their work would provide respite from the repetitious news imagery. A short time later, she heard there had been a Pentagon explosion and rumors that other attacks could be coming. Ann and her colleagues decided to go home, joining hundreds of other federal employees evacuating the Capitol and surrounding government buildings. The crowd frequently looked up at the sky and at the sounds of the air force jets “scrambling,” became more fearful. Traffic ceased and the lines of people walking home were eerily silent. Ann said hundreds of government workers wearing their tags and dressed in business attire walked through crime-ridden neighborhoods to the stunned silence of their occupants. The crowds strode mutely through the streets while residents sitting on their porches stared back. “It was surreal,” she said.

Ann’s experience of walking with a silent crowd and navigating through dangerous neighborhoods that were also silenced by an unfathomable event corresponds to symptoms associated with massive trauma. These symptoms include speechlessness, accompanied by dissociation from the hear-and-now and an inability to fully assimilate the experience except through delayed, fragmented, and often-repeated images (Caruth “Introduction” Trauma: Explorations, v der Kolk and van der Hart “The Intrusive Past”). Noted psychiatrist and
Holocaust survivor, Dori Laub, explains the experience and witnessing of trauma temporarily paralyzes cognition and emotions, destroying the inner dialogues people hold with themselves that structure and balance daily life. That is, until mourning and confronting the losses through internal retrospection and interpretation takes place, there is no “coherent narrative” that provides meaning (Laub, “September 11 – An Event without a Voice” 2418).

With distance from the initial trauma, afforded by time and the sharing of emotions and feelings with her family and co-workers, Ann both experienced and witnessed the healing power of storytelling and could make sense of her traumatic, episodic memories of 9/11. Her ethnographic training also enabled her to quickly respond and contribute to the healing and recovery of the nation. Within days following the attacks, Ann issued a “Call for Participation” to various historical and folk life organizations to amass “man-on-the-street” interviews. She believed that capturing the initial, raw emotions and fears of a traumatized public would not only provide a type of “talk therapy,” but would also preserve a historical moment, as presented in the oral histories of the attack on Pearl Harbor recorded by Alan Lomax. She warranted that audio recordings would help dispel the awkwardness of interviewing subjects and would elicit unselfconscious emotion. In other words, the interviewee would presumably be less self-conscious and would speak more freely to a compassionate listener than to a medium that represented a mass audience.

1 Ann referenced Carl Lindahl’s work with Hurricane Katrina victims. He and his volunteers facilitated the survivors’ storytelling and documentation of the disaster on their terms (Lindahl “Legends of Hurricane Katrina”).

2 On the other hand, the audio-visual testimonies recorded for the Yad Vashem Archive of Holocaust Survivors accelerated the reclamation of repressed memories by the survivors and functioned similarly to psychoanalysis in that the videos revealed effects of trauma in the interviewees; non-verbal gestures and silences. Amit Pinchevski
However, in addition to the audio recordings, the staff received unsolicited letters, emails, pictures and videos, demonstrating both the public’s need to act and the empowerment afforded by diverse, yet networked media. The “September 11, 2001 Documentary Project,” originally conceived for the reception and preservation of audio recordings, quickly adjusted its scope and mission as Ann and her staff ingested the assorted memorabilia. During the Anthrax scare, the U.S. government postal service shut down, stalling Ann’s progress in completing the project. Nevertheless, she created categories and finding aids for the voluminous and diverse material, including a classification for Internet humor. She also observed distinct regional differences and narrative arcs reflected in the stories, such as the East Coast’s memories of a promising work day prior to the attacks in sharp contrast to the West Coast’s reports of disorientation upon awakening to news of the attacks.

Ann and her staff constructed meaning from multiple sources and perspectives, drawing upon repeated phrases, imagery, and narrative elements in the written and audio items to extract themes and categories. A particularly salient discovery generated by the question, “How did you first learn of the attacks?” was the visuality of 9/11 and the impressions that TV broadcast news seared into the collective memories. Much has been written on the pathological effects of 9/11’s broadcast news coverage (Silver, et.al., Vasterman, et. al., Iyer, et.al.) as well as the medium’s rhetorical and political effects (Greenberg, Kahane, Grusin, Coonfield, and Huxford). Ann recognized the exigency of TV, noting the context it provided the trauma narratives and the more personal and emotional reactions in contrast to the oral history collections of Pearl Harbor. She suggests that audio-video technology “bears witness” to and reproduces the unconscious effects and conditions of traumatic memories (“The Audiovisual Unconscious”).
believed both the visuality of the repetitious television broadcasts and the increased storage capacity of digital audio technology contributed to the emotional tenor of the 9/11 oral histories.

During this time, a similar collaborative and crowd-sourced effort to build a digital archive was developing between the American Social History Project of the City of New York and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. Their joint mission was to collect firsthand accounts expressed in multiple digital formats, particularly those exchanged in the emergent social media of the Internet, leading to the creation of The September 11 Digital Archive. The collections, including born digital items, either extracted from the web or solicited from donors, not only captured the immediate reactions and relays of grief and emotion but also the nascent Internet culture of the early 21st century. This archive established a model and precedent for digitally archiving and memorializing massive, catastrophic events. Noted for its speedy response to the disaster, collaboration with several cultural heritage and civic institutions and organizations, and the development of open-source, flexible and open-ended software platforms, these practices have since been adopted by many international and national digital disaster archives created since 9/11.

At the time of these respective collecting efforts, the mass media coverage and official statements from the White House focused primarily on polemics: the war on terror; the defense of freedom and U.S. innocence; the U.S. Patriot Act and suspension of due process for terrorists. In addition to covering the aggressive foreign policy towards Iraq and favorably interpreting government and military decisions, the mass media also disseminated images and stories of individual lives lost (e.g. “Portraits of Grief” in the New York Times) and public funerals for the fallen heroes. Emerging from mass media and White House statements were attempts to solidify
and entrench a more secretive government and maintain an illusion of continuing prosperity and harmony between the various facets of American society. Themes of revenge politics for the deaths of innocents and hero worship of the first responders and armed forces willing to sacrifice their lives for the defense of freedom, for example, were more commonly reported than the posttraumatic effects of the 9/11 attacks, or the displaced homes and incomes of those who lived in the vicinity of the attacks. In contrast to such themes of solidarity and patriotism, other voices and perspectives unfolded in the narratives and pictures collected and preserved in the “September 11 Documentary Project” and the September 11 Digital Archive. Artwork, poetry, and narratives that depicted stress, grief, and a desire for military restraint populated many of the collections in these respective repositories that countered the mass media broadcasts and official statements.

From Neighborhoods of Pause to Communities of Participation

What we are witnessing in response to multiple acts of domestic and international terrorism is a proliferation of online memorials, spontaneous (vernacular) shrines, and archives of disaster, including The Hurricane Memory Bank, The April 16th Archive (Va. Tech. shootings), February 14th 2008 Memorial (Northern Illinois University), and Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive and WBUR Oral History Project. The convergence of documenting, mourning, and memorializing catastrophic events within the digital disaster archive demonstrates the social and cultural nature of trauma and represents patterns of mourning intricately bound in media technologies. The ritual acts of mourning, including memorials, prayers and vigils, and anniversary events, provide structure and space for public performances of grief. Socially constructed and interactive, the content and meaning of these
rituals are specific to the audience/participants, and could be understood as “working through” as opposed to “acting out” the psychic and collective trauma that large-scale disasters produce. Working through grief describes a reasoning process that enables us to resituate our present lives from events of the past as opposed to acting out grief, in which the grievous event or loss from the past continues to haunt us like a “melancholy feedback loop” (La Capra 693 Kindle).

While “working through” connotes socially acceptable behaviors and recovery of an intact psyche and subject identity, the process may include dissension and resistance to official interpretations of the event. Protests against governing institutions and expressions of minority populations emerged, for example, in the aftermath of 9/11. Conversely, “acting out” behaviors commonly associated with anti-sociality, as in acts of aggression against targeted enemies, may receive tacit, if not overt, support by governing institutions (Haskins, “Between Archive and Participation” 407). In both respects, seeking meaning in the aftermath of a large-scale disaster involves a struggle of individual and collective identity, and conflicting narratives between and within mass media and networked social media reflect this tension.

Sharing memories and trauma narratives is critical for communities as well as individuals recovering from a disaster in that they help fill the void—the loss of innocence, of life lived before, and of loved ones. Analysis of trauma narratives, including the linguistic structure, level of cognitive awareness, and cultural traditions of “talk therapy” reveal trauma narratives are complex and do not always produce posttraumatic growth (Neimeyer, “Fostering Posttraumatic

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3 The notion of “void” may actually be an imagined world of security, of stable relationships that when disrupted by death and destruction, require us to reassess our world.
Growth,” Kearney, “Remembering the Past”, Wimberly 2011). Robert Neimeyer suggests that dominant narratives, such as politically or socially popular accounts, may diminish the “authorship” of an individual’s memory and “colonize” that individual’s self-concept and identity (“Fostering Posttraumatic Growth,” 56). Trauma narratives may also represent dissociated memories that the individual can relate to others, but not be able to synthesize and integrate into the self (Brewin, et. al.). Nevertheless, widespread construction and dissemination of stories and images of a traumatic event and its aftermath through media technologies indicates the therapeutic potential of online memorials. Through a networked and highly participatory culture, online memorials and various online communities (such as those grouped in Twitter, Facebook, or Reddit) emerge as collective bodies of mourners, underscoring the psychosocial dimensions of trauma (Micalizzi 2014).

*An Epoch of Disaster Archives-Issues and Challenges*

The lingering affects\(^4\) of 9/11 and the missions of mourning, documenting, and memorializing that co-exist in disaster archives inspire three research questions guiding this dissertation:

1. How are the digitization and archiving of media and communications influencing the collective memories and ritual acts of mourning?

\(^4\) Posttraumatic growth refers to experiences of emotional or spiritual insight, or the discovery of new talents or abilities that people attribute to surviving a traumatic experience (Berger).

\(^5\) The term “affect” refers not only to emotional or poetic responses, per se, but to the contagious effects and preverbal conditions of sense memories that influence actions and thoughts (Massumi, Hansen, and Grusin). In this context, the “affect” of 9/11 is unconsciously remembered and repeated in similarly mediated events, discernible in such memes as “We are Americans,” “We are Boston Strong,” and “We are Charlie,” representing 9/11, the Boston Marathon Bombing, and the Charlie Hebdo attacks, respectively.
2. Are we living in a trauma culture?

3. How does user-participation contribute both an aesthetic and ethic for disaster archiving?

These questions assume the digital disaster archive is mimetic (as in replicating the chaos and lack of narrative coherence of a disaster that could possibly re-traumatize site visitors), if not representative, of the means by which highly technologized societies absorb the shock of traumatic events and prepare for future disasters. As with large-scale efforts to rebuild communities devastated by natural or man-made disasters, the disaster archive optimally represents the diversity of opinion and experience, establishes networks, and promotes peer outreach and assistance to others. The archive, like our technologized, networked society, is a hybrid system of disciplined practices in the Foucauldian\(^6\) sense, and a prosumer public as Henry Jenkins\(^7\) defines. The regulatory and traditional practices of archives in general and the distributed authority and contagious emotion\(^8\) of the public, specifically, converge in the disaster archive.

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\(^6\) “Foucauldian” refers to a method of analyzing socio-cultural and political phenomena as “discourses,” that are regulated by both tacit and overt disciplinary practices and dominant cultural forces, (including global capitalism and effects of networked media).

\(^7\) Henry Jenkins, media scholar and author of *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, characterizes the prosumer as a consumer who has obtained producer status and expertise by acquiring media production skills and gaining both facility and popularity with social networking (“Moral Economy of the Web 2.0” 2008).

\(^8\) I define contagious emotion as the viral spread of fear and uncertainty, for example, generated through social and mass media, prompted or encouraged by official statements (e.g. “Code Orange”), and evidenced in the disaster archive collections.
Thus, undergirding this research are the theoretical constructs of Michel Foucault’s disciplines, particularly “bio-power,” and Henry Jenkins’ “participatory culture.” Within the archival collections reside polyphonies of voices, articulating and making sense of the void that traumatic events produce (albeit, a dissenting voice may be difficult to locate as I discovered in my analysis of disaster archive contents, further addressed in Chapters 5 through 7). Individual testimonies, images of spontaneous shrines, letters, prayers, artwork, and documentation of ceremonies are each uniquely and historically laden with their own conventions and standards for mourning (Ortiz, and Sanchez-Carretero). Overarching these individual items and “genres of mourning,” however, are the conventions of archival practices and standards, political forces, and technical constraints that limit and shape the disaster archive. The disciplines that guide official archiving and civic and national responses to a disaster, (mental health services, police and military forces, for example), reflect a modern society in which “biological existence is reflected in political existence” (Foucault 1984). The customs of establishing nationality, social security numbers, and immunization records from birth, for example, are measures by which the state apparatuses become integrated in individual life. The stability of civic life is the assurance of individual human rights, including the right to live. The biological life is also a political life.

Dynamic and unique to the event and community, the disaster archive is, essentially, a dialogic space⁹ where visitors may engage with varied and multiple iterations of trauma and

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⁹ Dialogic space refers to Mikhail Bakhtin’s “dialogism,” in which multiple voices (e.g., perspectives, ideologies) construct meaning that, in turn, reveal social and psychological influences. Bakhtin’s concept, “double-voiced narration,” is particularly suited for interpreting social media collections within the disaster archive. The dialogues exchanged through tweets, blogs, and other forms of social media display raw emotion, ideologies, and civic identity (among other topics) that when reviewed at a distance, demonstrate how meaning might be constructed without a clearly defined authority or narrative (Bakhtin).
recovery. The lack of “authorial consistency” (Daniel, “The Database,” 2115-16), nevertheless imparts an ethos of collaboration and media technologies that is consistent among the disaster archives I researched. This ethos is facilitated by what Jenkins describes as “spreadable media”—the circulation of media determined, in part, by the preferences and editing made by the public (Jenkins 2008). As will be further discussed in the “comparing disaster archives” chapter, participatory archiving elevates the status of non-expert contributors.

Although Foucault’s “bio-power” and Jenkins’ “participatory culture” help theorize the tensions between civic and cultural agencies and the effects of media, their frameworks do not adequately address the effects of trauma on communities. To examine how disaster archives both historicize and mourn the collective trauma, I refer to trauma theories that focus on the affected community. Kai Erikson, sociologist and noted scholar of human catastrophes, observes that trauma deepens when an afflicted community receives no emotional support and lacks witnesses. A cynical helplessness pervades the community (Erikson 188). To counteract this helplessness, my research illuminated several examples where collaborative efforts between mental health care workers, ethnographers, and cultural heritage organizations gathered survivor/witness accounts as part of the recovery process (Punzalan, Gubrium and Harper).

Recent trends in digital disaster archives and museum/library policies are establishing a bridge between the affective and cognitive means of knowing. Jim Gardner, curator at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in 2001, compared his curation of the September 11 exhibit to being a “grief counselor,” essentially designing a memorial to facilitate the public’s need for mourning. He noted that historians and curators traditionally operated from a detached objectivity, using time and discovery of facts to establish criteria for selecting and
preserving artifacts. Yet, he and his staff felt compelled to respond to the public grief and create exhibits of the memorabilia and ephemera they donated to the museum (“September 11: Museums”). Rainey Tisdale, Gretchen Jennings, and other museum curators address the need for local museums to respond to crises through timely and coordinated efforts with community resources, offering safe havens as well as sites for sharing stories.

There are emotional and psychological risks, however, to curating an ongoing or recently experienced crisis. Without psychological, chronological, or spatial distance from the crisis, curators have difficulty abstracting meaning and creating interpretive exhibits. The curators and archivists of grief collections who I interviewed, Ann Hoog, Library of Congress; Alexandra Drukakis, Jenny Pachucki, and Rose Deeb, National September 11 Memorial/Museum; and Alicia Peaker and Jim McGrath, Northeastern University, each described a process of examining a multitude of objects that while similar in item type and message, could occasionally trigger emotional reactions. The time allotted for processing these grief collections was abbreviated due to the intensity of the public grieving at that time, and the need to complete their respective exhibits/archives for facilitating public mourning. My interviewees were also residents in the cities where the disasters occurred and they shared personal relationships with the people and places represented in their collections. These factors of emotional, chronological, and spatial proximity to the disaster interfered with the objectivity practiced by historians, archivists, and curators in general.

Consequently, independent curator Rainey Tisdale recommends the practice of recognizing symptoms of PTSD in museum workers as part of a cultural heritage institution’s disaster planning (“Museums as Healers”). Following Rainey’s creation of the exhibit, “Dear
Boston: Messages from the Marathon Memorial,” in which she gleaned a message of hope after examining thousands of artifacts memorializing the Boston Marathon Bombing, she required mental health counseling for symptoms of PTSD (“Personal interview”). Similarly, after listening to and reading thousands of personal accounts describing the attacks of 9/11, Ann Hoog was unable to verbally share her 9/11 experiences with friends and family despite her discernment of a “narrative arc.” She noted a common trajectory of emotions that progressed from shock, dismay, and fear to acceptance and philosophical reflection. These curators absorbed the emotional impact of the multiple artifacts and constructed categories and thematic collections, while adopting practices associated with first responders: speedy response to the disaster, facilitated by close relations with other civic organizations and institutions.

Characteristics of posttraumatic stress, including somatic responses of numbness and immobility, and features of recovery, such as the returned ability to verbalize and narrate memories of the traumatic event, are two dimensions or themes I observed in my analysis of selected disaster archives. Notwithstanding the evidence of shock, mourning, and recovery, few digital archive/memorials could consolidate the trauma or provide the public a narrative history or exhibit a trajectory of mourning to healing. Also missing from the contents of the archive/memorials was documentation of posttraumatic stress suffered by curators or archivists developing the collections. Although the archive/memorial experts avoided overarching narratives that were evident in the official statements and mass media at the time, such as American innocence in the war against terror, the disaster archive/memorial collections conveyed collective memories that included aversion to war and a desire for peace and racial tolerance. The official narratives as expressed by the White House following the 9/11 attacks of
innocence and belief that terrorism only comes from outside, may not have entirely misled the public, but there was little public debate and the counter-narrative (admitting the state apparatuses for governing and protecting the public may actually be inciting terrorism through exploitative policies), could have further destabilized the traumatized public’s sense of security.

The effects of living within the traumatized community and memorializing an ongoing history of events also posed challenges to the professional ethics of archiving and curating. Contemporary archivists, in general, have already had to adapt professional ethics to the networked effects of the Internet and database structures. The traditional ethics of objectivity, truth, and respect des fonds, while still operative, have assumed new interpretations. Diversity of representation replaces objectivity in selection criteria, truth is relative and individually determined, and the original order and succession of the archive’s items (as recorded in the metadata) no longer serves as a primary means for organizing and accessing the items (Ketelaar “Tacit Narratives” 138-139). User-generated content in general, and individual accounts of mourning and recovery specifically, afford the prosumer (producer and consumer of content) and archivist a model and mission for the disaster archive (Recuber “The Prosumption of Commemoration”).

Thus, the disaster archives encompass vernacular and official commemorations and opinions, presented for public consumption as well as participation. Anticipating the public’s response to and use of the September 11 Digital Archive was partly based on observations of the public at numerous vernacular shrines staged in the various neighborhoods of New York City (Haskins 409-410). The vernacular shrines presented an iconography of innocence (e.g. teddy bears), individuality (photos of the deceased and personalized messages), and symbols of
patriotism and religious beliefs. Key differences distinguishing the vernacular from official presentations of mourning, include the displays of regional customs and local organizations in temporary (vernacular) memorials. Group identity, evidenced by signs, condolence letters, and other ephemera placed at such sites, reflected diverse populations whose national identity was mediated by their group beliefs. Although similar statements of patriotism appeared in both official acts (e.g. national prayers and memorials) and local, common sites of mourning, the vernacular sites included a variety of politics and opinions (such as pleas for peace and tolerance) that was not evident in the official statements. I discuss these distinctions more thoroughly in chapters 6 and 7, and suggest that during the brief interim following the 9/11 attacks and preceding the invasion of Iraq, the temporary shrines and crowdsourced artifacts exhibited a greater degree of uncertainty and opportunity for challenging official political opinion than evidenced by mass media.

Another distinction of vernacular commemorations of terrorist-inspired disasters is the emotional, personal and folk quality of these sites, which foster cohesion and solidarity at the local levels. Curator Rainey Tisdale created the “Dear Boston” exhibit through an “affective” semiotic/linguistic analysis of the Boston Marathon Bombing collection, in which the meaning and significance of each item was felt as well as cognitively perceived. She explained that the artifacts from the spontaneous shrines projected an excess of emotion, in contrast to processing artifacts from more historical, official, or casual circumstances (Tisdale, “Personal Interview”). For catastrophic events, such as 9/11, the public’s need for sense-making and public spaces for mourning in the immediate after-math of disasters could not wait for the objectivity and distance of time normally practiced by historians and curators (Gardner, “September 11: Museums”).
Although museums and libraries have long served educational missions through the design and acquisition of provocative and compelling collections, the additional outreach services and extended operating hours during a crisis is gaining professional support (du Toit and Dye, Van Orden).

However, there are differences in opinion regarding the digital archive’s ability to aid a community’s recovery and future resilience. This argument rests on the assumption that reconstruction of a traumatic event in narrative form best assimilates the emotions and clarifies meaning. The sharing of one’s story is believed to have great therapeutic value and the knowledge that one’s experience will be shared and thereby be witnessed also contributes to the mourner’s recovery from cultural as well as clinical perspectives (Audergon, Kearney).

According to Tisdale, the archive’s lack of narrative postpones or obfuscates the healing potential of its public space of mourning, whereas a museum exhibit of a tragic event provides the narrative and generates movement past the objects that trigger emotion and memory. When planned carefully so as to construct a journey of mourning and recovery, the exhibit creates a collective memory with a coherent message (Tisdale).

Conversely, the “competing interpretations” of the trauma as expressed through multiple authors of the digital archive collections represent fragments of the journey of mourning. Rather than represent the collective memory of a particular group or provide a singular narrative of the event, the disaster archive’s multiple “texts of mourning” place site visitors, contributors, and curators at various stages of recovery, including shock and incomprehension, followed by sorrow and grief, and finally rediscovering solidarity with others and the ability to resume normal life. The archive’s stories and imagery that convey both the initial speechless shock and the
reflective, cognitive awareness, enable the participants (contributors, viewers, and curators) to “mourn at your own pace.” I argue in this dissertation that the multiplicity of narratives and apparent polysemy of contributors is a more homologous and relevant form for representing a widespread trauma. That is, the archive/memorial enables the contributor to be both participant and subject, establishing “aesthetics of dignity” through the distributed and non-hierarchical authorship of the database (Daniel). Minority voices that would otherwise not be represented in the archive, except as exotic “others,” assume legitimacy as co-authors of their memories in community archives (Bastian, et. al.). It stands to reason that collective authorship of disaster archives would also provide legitimacy (dignity) to the experiences and opinions of all contributors. However, I also argue that both public and private online mourning rituals appear as incomplete processes. There are no final words, narrative structures, or performances that cannot be refreshed, augmented, or dispersed and reconstituted. In cybermemorials, I believe the rituals of mourning are clearly part of the social, consumer world. Otherwise, I would argue that mourning is cultural and as seen in the Middle East, much wailing and performances of grief are made public, unlike more reserved Western models. Without also providing a means for catharsis, however, the archive’s database and ethic of “mourning at your own pace” may not actually contribute to the community’s healing. Although disaster archives continue to evolve with other social media technologies, best practices for developing sites of remembrance and mourning are emerging in professional discourse (Brennan, Jennings,). Among the more innovative practices are the invention of data displays that include layers of image and text, such as Neatline, used in Our Marathon. While data visualization tools will be discussed in a later
chapter, it is important to note that technical innovations inspired by the public’s needs (including mourning) are an essential best practice for disaster archives.

In her book, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Cultures*, Ann Cvetovich presents an alternative archive of trauma to what she describes as “conventional forms of documentation” —trauma defined as pathological and resulting from an extreme event. She relates the emotional experiences of lesser traumas, such as depression, to larger, “socially situated political violence,” such as racism. By situating trauma in commonplace anxiety and depression, and connecting individual grief to the broader social landscape, Cvetovich imagines an archive of emotions, derived from diverse and unusual objects heretofore hidden from public view and unacknowledged. Citing gay and lesbian archives as being critical agents for recovering repressed history, she observes that like traumatic memory, the emotional archive may lack the “coherence of narrative,” but the eclectic, grassroots style of the donors and collections is nevertheless meaningful and cathartic for its community (2003).

What possible aesthetic can be apprehended in a disaster archive, when its database structure and non-hierarchical and non-linear collections present disjointed memories and artifacts? To ground my assessment of the aesthetics of the disaster archive, I examine database logic, theorized by Lev Manovich and others. The logic of the database--its functionality, open-ended content, non-linear order, and interface design--also comprises its aesthetic. In other words, how objects “perform” is deeply integrated with how they “look.” The meaning of objects is not fixed and is understood to take on varying connotations depending on their placement and juxtaposition to other objects, which in turn is dependent on the coding and relations defined within the database (Cohen and Rosenzweig, Daniel). Matthew Kirschenbaum notes that as
interfaces cannot be separated from their functionality, neither can they be isolated from aesthetics.

Congruity between the archive’s mission and its interface is not only a matter of aesthetics. The ethics of the archive are located in its principles for defining and manipulating objects, which include classification schemes that in the case of disaster archives, reflect the institutions’ interpretation of the public’s needs and the common vernacular. While not entirely controlled by the inherited “positivist” and “efficiency” models, (given that some varieties of social media and remixed digital objects are not easy to classify or add to the archive), the development of the database has been directed by its scientific origins (Galloway 99). Other indices of an archive’s ethics include collaboration (Jenkins), and as discussed previously, features that enhance emotional connections and enable empathic as well as cognitive responses.

I propose a critical investigation of "participatory" digital archives related to global catastrophes that examines the “disaster” archive’s representation of traumatic events as ethical and aesthetic translations of public and private memory. The disaster archive provides highly technologized and networked societies evidence of the collapse of space and time that occurs when we attempt to historicize an ongoing traumatic event. Through production or interaction with the content, the public can participate in curatorial acts: selecting, arranging, and describing or tagging content. Although curation as such does not resolve the dilemma of continued mourning and remembrance versus creating narratives for closure, the process nevertheless results in the construction of meaningful aspects of the event. In other words, the disaster archive/memorial preserves the effects of trauma (repetitive, haunting replays of the tragic event) and simultaneously, the ongoing work of mourning through social engagement.
Participation is a continuum of interactive user behaviors ranging from simply accessing a site to contributing to the archival policies. It is both facilitated and constrained by disaster archiving’s social and technical affordances. These affordances include a user’s sets of skills as well as the site guides and templates for uploading various formats and genres of content. Since the 9/11 attacks, the public use of digital technologies, in general, increasingly reflects consumer driven content, negotiated, created, and disseminated through various social media platforms and personalized apps (Meeker “Internet Trends 2014”). According to a 2012 Pew Internet report, the American public obtains news and information from online sources, attributing this surge to increased social media sites and mobile devices (“In Changing News”). This shift from the limited participation of TV viewing to the performative “viewing” through mobile apps and social networks is evident in the collections I examined and analyzed: Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive & WBUR Oral History Project.

**Rationale for Interdisciplinary Methodology**

This dissertation presents arguments for adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the study and construction of disaster archives, a complex subject attracting diverse disciplines including the digital humanities library science, anthropology, history, literature and the arts. As a fundamental resource for all subjects, and as a historical and traditional institution, it is not surprising that researching archives would generate interest by multiple disciplines. In the last ten years, however, archive scholars have included the methods and theoretical bases of psychology, sociology, post colonialism, and various technical and humanistic aspects of digitization to interrogate archival theory (McKemmish and Gilliland).
Two major influences on diversifying archival science are postmodernism and the digital humanities. Postmodern values, including resistance to formal, essentialist arguments and the belief that neutrality in language or disciplinary practice is impossible are noticeably present in contemporary archive discourses (Manoff, “Theories of the Archive,” Greene, “The Power of Archives”). Notwithstanding the impact that two separate publications by postmodern theorists Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault had on the archiving discipline, other postmodernist values including self-reflexivity and acknowledgement of politically situated and ethnic bias, also contribute to collaborative research between archives, anthropologists, and ethnographers (Underberg and Zorn). With the advent of digital media and application of computation to humanities texts, the archive’s position as a fixed or static resource becomes untenable, particularly as contemporary archives emphasize the collective well-being of the general public (Ivacs “The Pervasiveness of Archives”). The digital humanities community of scholars, as represented by numerous blogs, tweets, conference papers, and journals, support values of diversity in organization, self-reflexivity, and collaborative, analogical processes, in which people from multiple disciplines work together to “do knowledge work” for the common good (Spiro “This is Why We Fight,” Gold “Introduction”). The ethos of digital humanities collaboration operates within the context and technical affordances of the archive, and enables the transfer of knowledge between such disciplines as computer science, graphic design, social science, and the humanities—a phenomenon that produces new knowledge disciplines more aptly described as “transdisciplinary” (Yu-wei Lin).

I therefore approach my interdisciplinary dissertation both ontologically (investigating the institutional practices, collaboration between experts and non-experts, and the meanings and
effects of the archive’s polyvocal contents), and epistemologically (documenting the innovative solutions of digital disaster archives and proposing a poetics for the disaster archive). To reach an ontological perspective, I relied on ethnographic methods of research and discovered insight into the ongoing changes to disciplinary practices and definitions of terms regarding digital archives and grief collections. I was also able to abstract dimensions of mourning and formations of group identities from coding and charting statements (See Appendices D-F). I was less able to discern ideological or cultural effects of the media used to create these collections from coding statements. To ascertain the political and cultural aspects of trauma and of archiving, and also identify ethical and aesthetic issues, I drew upon several postmodernist ideas, including the decentralization of authorship and the social construction of language and culture. I discovered a middle position that acknowledged the commercialization of grief and the expediency with which popular culture (via social media as well as film) at one extreme, and the challenge to corporate media and hegemonic politics by vernacular shrines and disaster archives at the other. In other words, I assessed the political and cultural dimensions of disaster archiving more optimistically than Adorno might have viewed the digital disaster archive, but with greater skepticism than Jenkins’ prosumer logic would predict.

Additionally, I incorporated studies of posttraumatic stress disorder and posttraumatic growth in individuals and entire communities that have suffered widespread loss by a traumatic event. Again, I established a middle position for defining trauma culture. I believe my investigations of the disaster archive/memorial contents provided evidence of resilience and working through traumatic events that countered the belief that collectively experienced trauma is a cultural invention (Radstone, Reisner). On the other hand, the commodification of trauma
and mourning, evidenced by the “memorial mania” described by Erika Doss, and the commercialization of cybermemorials suggests that even participating in rituals of mourning (working through the trauma) are controlled, in part, by a consumer-oriented culture.

Finally, I examined the epistemological dimensions of the archive/memorial, using concepts espoused by digital humanists, including the idea that “scholarship and pedagogy” develops through praxis (Spiro 526) - innovation through iterative and collaborative practice. I used evidence of interactive timelines, data visualizations, and guidelines for crowdsourcing to examine the various ways in which disaster archive/memorials produce meaning and where innovative practices (like crowdsourcing metadata) develop alongside popular forms of digital media. What I discovered was a perfunctory interest in crowdsourcing and a greater focus on developing and sustaining these disaster archive/memorials for future research - a mission more esoteric than populist. Nevertheless, I credit both ethnographers and digital humanists for their pedagogical and scholarly values, including the need to establish self-reflection, transparency, and collaboration with other disciplines and experts, and believe future research in archiving disaster warrants a fusion of their respective methods and products.

To gain a better understanding of how cultural, heritage institutions are translating multi-media artifacts and documents into digital spaces for remembering and mourning traumatic events, I examined four institutionally-sponsored collections of trauma that coincide with the history of networked social media. I selected the Library of Congress’ (LC) Folklife division as my first site investigation because it created two of the earliest digitization projects of the September 11 attacks during a time when the Internet’s social media platforms were not yet incorporated into museum and archival collections. These collections included the “September
11 Documentary Project,” and the “Witness and Response” exhibit that also featured a website. Additionally, because these collections are a part of the American Folklife division, I knew the staff’s expertise in preservation, curation, and ethnographic research would provide a foundation for comparing other institutional collections and archival policies. I integrated my field notes into my theoretical analyses of the archives, realizing that heightened self-awareness and reflexive inquiry would enable me to better ascertain the emotional effects of developing, curating, and archiving a tragic event experienced by my interviewees.

While in Washington, D.C., I also visited the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, observing and recording aesthetic qualities of the physical site. This memorial includes an interactive website featuring a dynamic map of the memorial, stories of family members and survivors, and solicitations for sharing one’s 9/11 Pentagon story. The memorial’s wall of names and its landscape and reflecting pools convey the mourning of an inexpressible loss, comparable to the NSMM’s Memorial Plaza.

I selected the NSMM in New York City as my next site, advancing both chronologically and geographically in order and location of the September 11th digitized collections. At this site, I visited the Memorial and the Memorial Museum and interviewed three members of the NSMM staff: an historian, curator, and web designer. Like the redesigned and upgraded September 11 Digital Archive (911DA) but with greater outreach and marketing, the collections and exhibits at

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10 In preparation for my interviews with the curatorial staff of each institution and the creation and dissemination of surveys to local residents, I submitted an IRB, included in the appendices. My fieldwork and purpose were made transparent to my participants and I drew insights and patterns from this data to inform, rather than test, the theoretical basis of my arguments.
the NSMM are open-ended and adaptive. This quality ensures the preservation of the archive and in some ways, the culture of trauma.

My final site visit was centered in Boston, which focused on the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013. Northeastern University, in collaboration with several local and national institutions, developed *Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive & WBUR Oral History Project*. Because this archive contains evidence of a locally situated catastrophic event of national and international interest, an aggregation of trauma “texts,” and also represents a city and people with whom I am emotionally connected, I selected *Our Marathon* and related institutions to establish a case study of disaster archives.

Chapter 2 – Monuments, Memorials, and Archives

Chapter 2 presents a review of scholarly literature historicizing and theorizing archives and memorials, and the predominant issues and methodologies that shape archives of catastrophic events. A history of Western monuments and memorials, encompassing both ancient and modern eras, provides context and a basis of comparison between physical and virtual archives. The reviewed scholarly treatises elucidate the ancient and modern institutional practices of preserving and indoctrinating cultural heritage.

Traumatic memory as it is represented through physical and virtual memorials and enacted through public performance produces effects that may resonate over time. The empty fields of the Gettysburg Memorial, the USS Arizona Memorial suspended over the sunken battleship, and the somber granite wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial elicit palpable emotion as they iterate passages of mourning and remembrance. National identity is forged and
strengthened (or contested) through these war memorials by honoring the sacrifices of the dead. The material and abstract features of these national memorials afford the public loci for reflection and identity formation as well as opportunities for re-contextualizing historic events. Civil War re-enactments may reinforce racist and political divisions, Japanese-Americans argued for representation of the Japanese internment camps at the USS Arizona Memorial, and the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial sparked protests at its inception.

These heterogeneous expressions of mourning and examples of resistance to dominant power structures or narratives are largely tolerated in the digital disaster archives that accommodate multiple perspectives and resist grand narratives. However, heterogeneity in itself may be shaped and constrained by present political and social forces. Despite evidence that digitization of memorials and their corresponding participatory features promote both individualized mourning and affirmation of membership within the mourning community, the social and technical affordances of digital memorials “are subject to medium-specific restraints” (Haskins 406). Medium-specific restraints include regulations and guidelines for uploading and sharing content, as well as each medium’s technical properties, yet such restraints are often circumvented or remediated. Thus, the emerging participatory disaster archives provide models for processing grief as socially constructed phenomena.

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11 See discussion of participatory logic and crowdsourcing in Chapter 4, Digital Archives of Disaster and also my interviews with NSMM staff in Chapter 5, Data Findings and Analysis.
Chapter 3 – Critical Theories and Issues Related to Commemorating Traumatic Events

In this chapter, I present a literature review of several different theoretical approaches for investigating digital archives. I begin with an overview of critical cultural studies, citing Foucault’s work with epistemes and Barthes semiotics. Although Barthes did not address archives, per se, in his examinations of cultural works, his decoding of images as well as texts is useful for analyzing digital media. The regulations of disciplinary practices, as defined by Foucault, are also relevant for analyzing digital archive policies and their social and technical networks.

Collective and cultural memory is another area of scholarship that has been adopted by many contemporary archive scholars, including Laura Millar, Margaret Hedstrom, and Eric Ketelaar. Traditions of archiving include developing policies of neutrality and historical objectivity. Theories of collective and cultural memory, posited by such scholars as Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, challenge the idea of neutrality in archival practices. I discuss how this convergence of public memory and digital archives relates to the policies and also tenets of archivists and archive scholars.

Media studies offer additional fields of research that are applicable to this dissertation. I begin with a literature review of Marshall McLuhan’s media ecologies and the cultural and technical convergences in digital media that Lev Manovich describes in his database aesthetics. I also include the prosumer concepts of Henry Jenkins and relate the participatory ethos and consumer culture of the Internet to crowdsourcing content in digital disaster archives. In conclusion, I offer a critique of contemporary memorials and their relationship to restorative justice, citing the works of Erika Doss and Marita Sturken.
Chapter 4 – Contemporary Trauma Culture

Chapter 4 opens by defending the current study of trauma culture as an ethical and just pursuit, relevant for psychological, ethnographic, and humanistic methods of analysis. The origins of trauma as a methodological study begin with Freud and his studies of traumatized memory and combat fatigue in the veterans of World War I. Although many scholars believe Freud was unable to reconcile his previous theories of repression with the posttraumatic stress of returning WWI soldiers from the front, he recognized similarities between the traumatized memories in women suffering from hysteria and those of WWI combat veterans, (Kaplan, “Global Trauma” 4, Kring, et. al.). However, his discovery of the fragmentation and disassociation of traumatic memory and therapeutic talking cure continues to inform cultural understanding of trauma (Caruth, van der Kolk and van der Hart, Kearney, Gunn).

To lay the groundwork of trauma culture, the chapter relates cognitive theories of PTSD to theories of memory and how these theories are integrated into the responses by community-based mental health services and cultural heritage institutions to two disasters, the 9/11 attacks and the Boston Marathon bombing. Following a discussion of the various civic responses to these two, traumatic events, the chapter continues the investigation of trauma culture through trauma narratives, employed by ethnographic methods of research. Critical arguments for defining trauma as culturally based and situational include Jill Bennett, who considers trauma culture to be an intellectual episteme that is useful for elucidating underlying political issues (Empathic Vision), and E. Ann Kaplan’s discussion of ethical witnessing (or the lack, thereof) in the form of news photographs (“Global Trauma”). I also refer to arguments against the notion of a trauma culture that include critiques against the commodification and false witnessing of
trauma (Rothe, Shephard). Finally, I include arguments against the “discourse” of trauma culture by psychologists and cultural critics who argue our society is primarily resilient and recovers from traumatic events. Although I agree that people are generally resilient to trauma’s effects, I argue that the “affect” of trauma (whether originating from the mass witnessing of the 9/11 attacks and acts of terrorism since 9/11, or from unresolved crimes of racial, sexual, or ethnic hatred that continue to haunt the collective memory), is evident in our society.

Chapter 5 – Digital Archives of Disaster and a Methodology for Understanding Mourning and the Internet

In Chapter 5, I discuss online mourning and digital memorials. I introduce the subject of online mourning with a personal account of visiting a deceased friend’s cybermemorial and provide examples of online memorial providers. Following these examples of personal cybermemorials, I discuss cybermemorials designed for groups, including victims of naturally caused disasters and terrorist attacks.

I distinguish cybermemorials from digital archive/memorials, and also domestic archive/memorials from international ones in the following section. My examination and analysis includes these archive/memorials:

1. The Hurricane Memory Bank
2. The University of Canterbury, New Zealand’s UC Quake Studies
3. The Japanese Disaster Archive
4. Syracuse University’s Pan Am Flight 103/Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives
5. Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum
6. Madrid’s Archives del Duelo
7. Virginia Tech’s April 16th Archive

From this overview, I developed a matrix of dimensions for analyzing the disaster archive/memorials representing the September 11 attacks and the Boston Marathon Bombing.

Chapter 6 – Archiving and Memorializing the September 11 Attacks

Chapter 6 focuses on the digital disaster archives and digital collections that developed soon after the 9/11 attacks and the more recent construction of the National September 11 Memorial/Museum and corresponding website. The chapter also presents key findings from my site visits and interviews with the curators of the LCs “September 11 Documentary Project,” and the National September 11 Memorial/Museum. These archives represent a range of public participation, commensurate with other online and vernacular expressions of mourning that make publicly accessible individual grieving.

Several questions regarding the ethics of participation and the nature of the publicly donated artifacts guided my investigation of the archival contents. How diverse were the contributors and their items, and to what extent were they original creations or remediated and shared? Was there evidence of collaboration between the institution’s experts and the public, or levels of participation corresponding to levels of expertise? The responses to these questions generated categories for a comparison chart.

The aesthetics of the digital disaster archives were also interrogated, informed by questions including: 1) Does the site’s design interface, database structure, and overall usability support the dual mission of remembrance and mourning and 2) Does the site present innovative solutions, practices, or design elements that may be incorporated in future memorials and
pedagogical practices? Thus, aspects of design and notable breaks with or bridges to past memorials are categorized and included in the digital archives comparison.

Guiding the analysis of the websites and my field research were guidelines and recommendations from Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig’s work *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* and frameworks suggested by Aline Gubrium, Krista Harper, Natalie Underberg and Elayne Zorn, who incorporate their subjects and data sources into their research methodologies. Cohen and Rosenzweig’s overview of web design and genres address many of the aesthetic principles used in my comparative analysis and Gubrium, Harper, Underberg, and Zorn provide current examples of narrative analysis as applied to archival contents.

*Chapter 7 – Our Marathon and Boston Better: Archiving and Memorializing the Boston Marathon Bombings*

In this chapter I present my field research conducted at the City of Boston Archives, Northeastern University’s NU Lab for Texts, Maps, and Networks (digital lab and a sponsor of *Our Marathon*) and at the Fornax Bakery in the Roslindale suburb of Boston. I also discuss the key findings from my survey participants, who were asked to describe their “Boston Marathon Bombing” and “Watertown Lockdown” experiences, and to also visit and review the digital collections and interface of *Our Marathon*.

Although the two catastrophic events, the September 11 attacks and the Boston Marathon Bombing, differ dramatically in scale and national consequence, they share similar effects of mediatization on mourning (mass media, social media, and efforts to record and preserve local testimonies). Moreover, the disciplinary practices and tacit knowledge shared among museum
curators, archivists, historians, anthropologists, and mental health care workers converge in the
disaster archives and digital memorials of September 11 and the Boston Marathon Bombing.

Chapter 8 – Protocols and Poetics for the Disaster Archive

In this final chapter, I revisit my research questions and reflect on the evidence of my
data and research as they relate to the questions. I also provide a set of best practices derived
from my research of several digital disaster archives and the triangulation of data I compiled
from my interviews, observations, and survey responses.

Finally, I reflect on future implications of digital disaster archiving and recommend
establishing a more participatory and pedagogical type of exhibit builder to augment the
understanding of the traumatic event. In conclusion, I describe my Omeka prototype that
arranges content according to six dimensions: subject identity; participation; ethical
responsibility; aesthetics; historical consciousness; and evidence of trauma and recovery. These
dimensions were abstracted from my content analyses and indexing patterns evidenced from my
field data. They provide a structure for my collection and a possible heuristics for advancing
critical study of disaster archives.
CHAPTER 2: MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS, AND ARCHIVES

“...on the faces of the Obelisk the following inscription, & not a word more

‘Here was buried Thomas Jefferson author of the Declaration of American Independence of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom & Father of the University of Virginia? because by these, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish most to be remembered. [Scratched out] to be of the coarse stone of which my columns are made, that no one might be tempted hereafter to destroy it for the value of the materials...”

Thomas Jefferson, Epigraph instructions

Introduction

You could say that Thomas Jefferson’s hand-written instructions for his gravestone have become as monumentalized as the original stone obelisk. Preserved at the Library of Congress in the “Thomas Jefferson Papers” collection, this document specified the size, material, and location of his monument. Jefferson’s choice of the obelisk, of modest height and “coarse” stone, reflected both his concern for protection against vandals and his “republican iconoclasm.” 12 But these simple materials would neither protect the monument from destruction nor prevent the oncoming tide of towering statues and monumental imagery. The obelisk, chipped by admiring visitors, was replaced by a larger version while the original remained with family descendants until it was donated to the University of Missouri in 1883. Jefferson requested only three of his accomplishments be inscribed on the base and faces of the obelisk, and constructed precisely as directed. Jefferson considered writing the Declaration of Independence, founding the University

12 Jefferson’s sentiments reflected the then common opinion that public statues and monuments were beacons to elitism and appealed to the illiterate and anti-democratic. His aversion to monuments used as a form of civic pedagogy also reflected an ongoing political debate between his Republican Party and the Federalists, who wanted to construct an elaborate mausoleum for the late George Washington (Savage 2009).
of Virginia, and enacting legislation for maintaining religious freedom his most valuable contributions to the country. No other text or imagery was to adorn this monument.

Ironically, the three themes represented on his obelisk—governance according to democratic principles, the assurance that education would sustain a democratic government, and freedom from state religion—continue to guide our country, but have not necessarily remained consonant with Jefferson’s legacies. Jefferson’s epitaph is memorable for what it omits as much as for what it declares, including mention of his presidency and the Louisiana Purchase.

Figure 1: Thomas Jefferson, “Epigraph instructions,” 1826 (LC Manuscript Division).
Moreover, Jefferson’s rich legacy cannot be contained within this modest obelisk. The Jefferson Memorial, positioned as a cornerstone to the “national court of honor”\(^\text{13}\) in Washington, D.C. and completed in 1922, represents his many contributions while omitting his negative legacy of slave ownership. The inspirational and enlightened quotes from Jefferson’s well-known texts (inscribed on the memorial) appear ironic as a result, and the monumentalizing of this memorial—preserved for its historical value as opposed to commemoration or future enlightenment—illustrates a shift in historical consciousness and national identity.

In this chapter, I present a brief history of monuments, memorials, and archives through the writing technologies that developed in concert with these memory institutions. Antiquity scholars and historians have long associated the prototype writing of the Babylonians and Sumerians with documenting and preserving various trade transactions on the one hand, and the ancient monuments and memorials with commemorative acts, on the other. Since the 1990s, however, scholars have focused on the material attributes of archives and monuments, examining styles of lettering and imagery, and identifying systems of arrangement used by ancient scribes and rulers.\(^\text{14}\) Rather than simply translate or decode the ancient documents, this historical approach emphasizes the manner in which society collective remembers—a result of public

\(^{13}\) The “Court of Honor” at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago was an array of neo-classical architecture that inspired Congress in the early 20\(^{th}\) century to redesign the National Mall. Jefferson’s Memorial, of neo-classical columns and bronze statue depicts a “triumphal giganticism” at odds with Jefferson’s iconoclastic republicanism (Savage 244).

\(^{14}\) Nathan Arrington, François Choay, Polly Low, and James Sickinger discuss the visual rhetoric applied to archival documents as well as to monuments and memorials in their respective studies cited in this dissertation’s List of References. Their discoveries included evidence that imagery and materials used to create archival records or monuments were often interchangeable, and that private archives often co-existed in the public archives of Ancient Greece, the Near East, and Egypt. There was, in essence, a practical form of literacy that as Francis Yates observed, was mnemonic and based on imagery (Art of Memory 6379 Kindle file).
interpretation and performance at the cultural heritage site. Thus, the contemporary lens used to examine an ancient past opens insight into the symbolic uses of language.

The materials and conventions used by ancient and early modern societies for archiving and commemorating people and events illuminate parallel developments in writing technologies. Historically, materials of greater permanence, such as stone and marble and augmented by size and location, represented ruling powers. The rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of monuments—ideas of power and beauty communicated through formal qualities—helped shape collective memory. As modern notions of history developed, the reverence for monuments and memorials shifted from being valued as convenient empty vessels for present day uses to being fixed icons of the past, representative of ideas and values naturally supportive of their respective present-day ruling powers.

Benedict Anderson illuminates correspondences between print literacy, nationalism, and the perception of history as homogeneous, empty time. In this chapter’s history of monuments, memorials, and archives, I extrapolate the effects of digitization on perceptions of history and national identity from Anderson’s notions of modern history. Anderson attributes the formation of national identity to the “imagined community” that the population forms in response to the technical affordances of a common language and other means for defining boundaries and shaping a collective consciousness. The inventions of the newspaper, maps, and institutional

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15 I define modern notions of history in the Foucauldian sense of discourse: a marked shift from pre-modern (classicist) thought to modern ideological beliefs and methods that include progressive futures, universal statements, and language ensconced in objective, neutral terms. I also realize that despite the adoption of postmodern values, such as self-reflection and preference for non-essentialist statements (core beliefs) that admit diverse perspectives, the disciplinary practices of archivists and museum curators draw from both modernist and postmodernist ideas. By emphasizing the role of memory as opposed to modern history.
systems for naming and representing the population (e.g. census and museums) defined and reinforced an emerging national consciousness (Imagined Communities). Affordances of digitization include increased participation by the public in creating and distributing newsworthy events and forming group identities. Whether these groups represent formerly repressed ethnic identities or a conservative brand of nationalism, the public spaces of digital networks enable such diverse groups a certain equivalence for establishing collective memory and subject identity. Consequently, there is a visible fracturing of nationalism and an awareness of the heterogeneity of history and time.

The United States under Jefferson’s presidency had firmly replaced its colonial status with nationhood and the idea of a progressive history—enlightened by scientific and moral reasoning and thereby, improving humankind with each succeeding generation—was just developing. Monuments, memorials, and archives of the 19th and late 18th centuries reveal the modern development of historical consciousness and national identity. The emergence of historical consciousness inspired a variety of disciplines devoted to ascertaining the origins of life and society. Terry Cook explains that the professionalism of 19th century archivists was advanced by the application of empirical science to collecting and preserving artifacts of the past (501).

The proliferation of public museums, libraries, archives, and zoos—all collecting institutions—depended on emerging technologies as well as colonial conquests and scientific methods. Photography is cited by Cook and fellow archivist Margaret Hedström as being instrumental for reinforcing the ideas of a distant, fixed past that could be factually and truthfully represented. Expertise developed in the developing fields of art history and restoration,
archaeology, and museum and archival sciences, which facilitated the imagination of exotic cultures and also consolidated the homogeneity of modern society (Choay). Anderson cites the invention of the museum and the corresponding professionalism of archaeologists, historians, and curators as evidence of controlling the conservation, preservation, and identification of nativist pasts. The colonialist regime could appear as a benign guardian, but in effect, the museum strengthened the secular, modern state (far removed from its ancient past) of 19th century archivists (166).

The digitization of monuments, memorials, and archives has not divested these memory institutions of their scientific modes of classification, nor their association with governmental power. Yet, digitization has accelerated the displacement of an imagined sequence of events occurring in homogeneous, empty time by fomenting diverse perspectives and interpretations of places, people, and events. That is, digitization makes possible the unleashing of historic artifacts or documents from their material state and institutional control, and thereby, provides opportunities for questioning the conventions and frames used in archives and museums. Digitization has also afforded an integration of disciplinary practices that tends to blur the differences between these cultural heritage institutions. Despite this apparent flattening of the institutions and the subsequent challenge for defining the digital disaster archive, there is actually great diversity within archives, monuments, and memorials. In the section that follows, I offer operational definitions of each with the understanding that their distinctions are neither fixed, nor complete.
Defining Monuments, Memorials, and Archives – Implications for Critical Studies

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines monuments as statues, structures, or edifices designed to commemorate a person or event. The word originates from the Latin, *monumentum*, from the verb, *monere*, meaning to remind. In antiquity, monuments would have included multiple forms, including a “commemorative statue or building, tomb, reminder, written record, or literary work” (“Monument”). Memorials are defined as objects or performances that also commemorate and preserve the memory of a person or thing. The term, memorial, originates from Latin but is more closely associated with historical or legal records as in memorandum. Because memorials share an association with records and writing, the custom to inscribe epigraphs and names on tombs and monuments functioned as both monument and memorial. Nevertheless, while monuments and memorials both serve to remind us of people and past events, and monuments may also serve as memorials, contemporary memorials retain their mnemonic purposes and do not require a material substrate or physical presence such as associated with monuments.

The National Park Service distinguishes monuments from memorials by their physical presence and location. National monuments are generally associated with fixed, architectural structures embodying a person or event, but they may also include land deemed historic and representative of cultural heritage. National memorials may be architectural or ephemeral and serve to invoke the memory of an individual or group of people, such as the wall at the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial or the flame at JFK’s memorial. Their physical presence inspires an
“aura” that elicits certain behaviors such as observing from a respectful distance (Savage 6). Both types of national memory institutions provide spaces and resources for preserving and memorializing historic events or people, commemorating state power, and inspiring civic pride.

Private monuments are commonly associated with grave markers, establishing a site for mourning and remembrance of an individual, whereas private memorials connote ritual acts of mourning, such as funerals. Yet, the distinctions between monuments and memorials and between public and private, are often blurred and there are many examples of national memorials that appear to be monuments, such as the Jefferson Memorial, and national memorials that also function as private memorials, exemplified by the spontaneous shrines and private messages left at the base of the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial. Moreover, several state and national memorials constructed since the late 1990s include controversial subjects, such as the Confederate Soldier Memorials in Arizona and South Carolina, marginalized populations such as the Indian Memorial at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in Montana, or the seemingly innocuous Salem Village Witchcraft Victims’ Memorial in Massachusetts. Despite this memorial’s reference to a long debunked mythology, “witch hunts” occur in contemporary society where intolerance, bigotry, and mob mentality overrides rational deliberation. This memorial challenges the notion that the Salem Witch Trials were singular, anachronistic events

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16 Aura is an object’s authenticity—the object’s origin and associated traditions therein that resonate from its physical presence and inform its public reception. Kirk Savage explains the aura of the monument is dependent on the public’s perception of the monument’s sacred or mythic value, and is manifested through the ritualistic behaviors associated with visiting monuments (6). In opposition to mechanically reproduced art (or, for my argument, digital memorials), which derive value from the objects’ mass consumption, the aura of the monument draws its value from what Walter Benjamin describes, “its ritual function” (The Work of Art IV). Aura can be destroyed by mechanical reproduction, and the original context of its creation can be repurposed to suit political ends. Yet, aura can be reconstituted through bodily performance, such as the firefighter’s raising the flag at Ground Zero on 9/11 in imitation of the heroic image of the WWII soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima.
and thereby establishes the memorial as a contestable site of memory, representative of a broader, public issue (Doss *Memorial Mania*, 69). The ambiguous status of monuments and memorials is especially pronounced in contemporary society and Erika Doss explains that while “monuments” and “memorials” serve similar commemorative functions, “memorial” is the nom du jour as evidenced by the spate of state and national memorials constructed since the latter part of the twentieth century (*Memorial Mania* 38-39). As “sites of memory,” both monuments and memorials provide material reminders of state power and may incite protest as well as allegiance towards national identity (69).

Like official monuments and memorials, state sponsored archives convey power while helping to establish cultural memory, albeit through practices largely hidden from public view and knowledge. The archive is a repository of cultural history, a product of institutionalized record keeping, and metaphorically, a society’s memory. Archivists define the archive in more specific terms, emphasizing the fixed status of the records they ingest and preserve for future public access. The Society of American Archivists defines the archive as, “the non-current records of individuals, groups, institutions, and governments that contain information of enduring value.” Although the term, enduring value, implies an indefinite amount of time between the archivist’s original appraisal and the future, it does not declare the item to permanently remain valuable. The term enables future archivists to decide whether it remains worthy of preservation (SAA). However, within the profession, archive scholars argue for a less

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17 Erika Doss compares the 21st century “mania” for building monuments and memorials to the 19th century’s “statue mania.” However, the current mania is more inclusive and diverse as memorials mushroom around sites of car accidents, terrorist acts, and sacrifices of minority heroes (*Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*).
static definition, drawing on postmodern theory, memory studies, and the affordances of digital media to recast the profession into a more dynamic and socially responsive institution. Defining archives by their functions and potential uses rather than by their end products allows for multiple variations of archives, including scholarly editions, digital collections, and community archives.

Former president of the Society of American Archivists Mark Greene suggests replacing the archiving term “records” with “primary sources.” The former term connotes finality and completeness, provided by the archiving processes that emphasize the item’s original intent and value as evidence of the past. The latter underscores the importance of the patron’s access to and purposes for obtaining the records as opposed to apprehending the record in its original context and order. As primary sources, records are more likely to be viewed as functional objects, adapting to various contexts and requiring more flexible paths of access than traditional finding aids. Although both terms, record and primary source, are subject to the various interpretations assigned by their users, in this context, the term, primary source, allows for greater flexibility in the document type. Recasting archival records as primary sources illuminates several significant events and technological innovations that developed in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that continue to redefine the archive and its functions. These events include the Nuremberg Trials and audio-video technologies, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the intellectual climate of postwar and postmodern ideas. The memories and oral testimonies of victims, survivors, and witnesses to these terrible events not only provided extensive documentation for legal proceedings and historical context, but they also generated interest in the previously unheard voices and experiences of marginalized members of society.
Contemporary archives are greatly diversified by their contents, purposes, and policies. World events and shifts in intellectual thought precipitated the emergence of scholarly, community, and hybridized archives. Digitization of archive collections and greater outreach and collaboration with communities and institutions outside the archive has since made possible the myriad types of archives. In Millar’s book, *Archives: Principles and Practices*, she classifies the variety of archives according to their sponsors, collections, and overarching missions. For example, government archives are “institutional” by virtue of their institutional sponsor and official mandate to preserve and adhere to the policies for archiving administrative records. In contrast, local populations determine the collections and archival policies in community-based archives, which generally preserve local or indigenous cultural heritage. Each archive genre contains many variations including whether an archive has crowdsourced its metadata or included private and public documents. The disaster archives discussed in this dissertation are hybrids of community, collecting, and institutional or museum archives. They vary in multiple respects, although conventions of digital technology, similarities in content, and the missions of mourning and commemoration render the “disaster archive” an emergent genre among archives.

Like libraries and museums that feature disaster collections and exhibits, the disaster archive’s mission is primarily to preserve the local community’s cultural heritage, which in turn, depends on the public’s acceptance and re-enactment of collective memories. In the section that

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18 Hybrid archives are usually institutional or governmental archives that also acquire collections not created by the sponsoring institution. Large research universities often include the archives and special collections of individuals or local organizations relevant to the history and culture of the university. However, the term is also used for archives that ingest both born digital and digitized analog materials, and for large digital projects requiring the collaboration of multiple institutions.
follows, my history of monuments and memorials relates the materials and rituals used for mourning to the formation of civic identity and collective memory. The conventions used to inscribe ancient monuments and memorials were also used to indicate state power and regulate public mourning. Through this materialist and convention-based history of monuments and memorials, I establish a relationship between the technologies of inscribing memories and memorials with constructions of civic identity. Although the present digital technologies of memorializing are highly customizable, digital public memorials and disaster archives are nevertheless, sources of collective memory and cultural heritage. Despite their lack of material form and physical location, the digital memorial/archives generate public participation in mourning and remembering, and thereby, establish spaces for collective memory and history. As I explain in the section that follows, the materials and imagery used to create monuments and memorials established conventions for constructing collective memories through ritualized behavior. Although digital memorial/archives provide the formats and potential diversity of opinion that could generate public protest and/or awareness of political wrong-doing, my research presents largely homogeneous political opinion with an emphasis on healing and uniting the affected communities.

Monuments and Memorials: From Antiquity to the Present

The earliest known monuments are associated with death, pre-dating the proto-writing era of the Egyptian and Near Eastern civilizations identified as earthen mounds (tumuli) and dolmens (crudely shaped stone slabs designating burial tombs), located throughout the world from 4000-3000 BCE. These structures established an aesthetic for commemoration that continued into the Classical era and early Middle Ages (Burton; Choay). Ancient monuments
and memorials commemorated great leaders and invoked fear, if not adulation. The Latin word for monument, *monumentum*, is derived from the word, *monere*, meaning to remind, that in practice, ancient monuments brought the past to life through its evocative and powerful presence (Choay). When traumatic events destroyed entire communities or massive deaths, the monuments and memorials serve to rebuild civic identity as well as catharsis in mourning. (For example, Ancient Athens redesigned the ritual and funeral statuary for soldier funerals after the devastating losses during the Peloponnesian Wars.)

Much of the scholarship consulted for theorizing public commemorations of widespread catastrophic events refers to architecture, including the belief that Egyptian pyramids may have been designed for sacred worship as well as preserving dynastic rule (Stille). The Egyptian pyramids inscribed sacred beliefs and mystical spells associated with the afterlife and mythology of the pharaoh. The obelisk is similarly associated with Egyptian religion, in which the larger of these monoliths were placed outside temples with smaller ones placed inside. The ancient Romans regarded the obelisk with an almost cult-like obsession. Regardless of their original purposes the resilience and physical grandeur of the pyramids and obelisks connote power and their preservation depends on dominant political and economic forces (Stille; Kargon, and Gharipour). We can only speculate the original purposes of the Egyptian pyramids and other ancient monuments including Stonehenge and Angkor Wat, which have since their creation nurtured various realizations of cultural identity. What is evidenced by their physical presence, iconography, and cultural status is that regardless of the motivations behind their creations, monuments function as sites for ritual acts of commemoration and as sources of collective memory.
In Athens during the 5th century BCE, the customs of inscribing names and epitaphs on grave monuments, stelae, and tumuli were common for both private citizens and distinguished leaders (Burton 21; Sickinger 231). The placement of these monuments and cemeteries at the outskirts of town functioned as portals to the polis, elevating the status and memory of its citizens by juxtaposing the common against the elite, and by blending image with text. The images evoked civic pride, depicted as bravery in war, duty to home and family, or accomplishment in trade (Burton 22). Arrington argues, however, that 5th century Athens was a fledgling democracy frequently at war, accommodating the mourning rituals of its citizenry while sustaining the government and military administrations. The private burial traditions, including treatment of the dead bodies by families and the erection of elaborate monuments by the wealthy and elite, were suspended by the state during the early 5th century. The Athenian soldier graves and ceremonies during the 5th century were public, paid for by public funds and awarded the same type of ceremony and monument that aristocrats enjoyed in the previous century. During the previous century (the Archaic period), elites of the community were honored with monuments inscribed with epic scenes. In the following century, scenes of domesticity replaced the heroic imagery. All 5th century fallen soldiers, thus, were granted heroic funeral oratories and placed in common graves, marked by lists of names. The custom of figurative statues also waned during this period, but Nathan Arrington, Princeton professor of art and archaeology, believes extant monumental imagery from that era reveal “populist ideology.” Although he admits that evidence of non-sanctioned imagery may appear subversive, he points out that the statuary figures and styles are reminiscent of Athenian heroes made famous for their sacrifices for the community and therefore, support the polity (205). In other words, private
burial conventions were consistent with public monuments in their respective adherence to Athenian values.

Arrington observes that by establishing public cemeteries and burials, “communities and kin” navigated past these monuments. Consequently, Athenian citizens and leaders were cognizant of the effects the statuary had on its citizens. Decisions regarding the funerary monuments had to balance imagery that evoked sacrifice, service, and bravery against that which elicited memories of traumatic loss, pain, and suffering. Arrington suggests the inscriptions on the ancient funerary, including casualty lists, should be interpreted as visual rhetorical texts. He believes the aesthetics of the monument were instrumental in conveying and controlling public mourning. During the 5th century BCE in Athens, the people “…fashioned through words and images a civic ideology that praised death for the city” (Arrington 2).

Classics scholars, Diana Burton and Polly Low, caution against over generalizing from the ancient Greek funerary imagery and burial customs. Like Arrington, Burton observes the figurative imagery used on gravestone markers did not necessarily mimic reality, but may have represented ideas and concepts, or been purchased as a ready-made tombstone (Arrington; Burton). She suggests that despite the 5th century BCE Athenian edict against elaborate gravesites and burials once practiced by the elite, private burials that included funerary imagery of women and domestic settings (occasionally on a grand scale), were positioned alongside public gravesites and war casualty lists. This does not imply that women enjoyed equal political or social status with the male citizens and soldiers of war, but rather that there was a parallel aesthetic for promoting the civic ideology. In contrast to both Arrington and Burton’s premise that the fledgling Athenian democracy was represented, in part, through the public burials,
casualty lists, and domestic or soldier imagery, Low identifies nearly identical burial customs and aesthetics for funerary in Asia Minor’s oligarchic and non-democratic regimes (108). Despite these differences, Classics scholars generally agree that public life was more valued and pronounced in ancient Greece and that citizenship was granted more honor in 5th century BCE Athens than familial relationships.

In contrast, Greek theater provided a venue for expressing dissension and disagreement with the polity. Attitudes toward war, grief, and mourning could be examined in plays more explicitly than in the type of imagery appearing on gravestones and monuments. Public burials and monuments commemorated civic heroes, performing civic identity, whereas theater and oratory provided alternative platforms for public mourning. Emotions and expressions of dissent and disagreement with the state could be safely performed in Greek theater. And, while the trauma of viewing the dead bodies had been avoided by cremation and official public burials, temple friezes and white-ground lekythoi often depicted defeats and portrayals of death (Low 281). In this manner, the iconography could represent the absence of the dead’s presence and facilitate the healing previously associated with tending to the body.

Monumental architecture flourished during the Roman Empire, characterized by triumphal arches, columns, and statues. Prior to the reign of Imperial Rome, Egyptian obelisks were confiscated, transported, or copied by the late Hellenistic and Greco-Roman empires. The

19 White-ground lekythoi were privately purchased oil vessels used to transport the cremated remains of the deceased from battlefield to public burial sites. The white-ground enabled the surfaces to be painted, and could depict Greek mythology, the individual soldier, or any number of familial or intimate icons that could provide multiple and ambiguous interpretations (Arrington).
obelisk was associated with the mystery of Egypt’s ancient power and knowledge, as evidenced by the single massive stone used in its construction and the enigmatic hieroglyphics that covered its faces. Although the ancient and medieval world frequently appropriated and repurposed relics of the past, rewriting inscriptions to reflect the ruling powers and beliefs, the obelisks remained monuments of distinction, “intellectual palimpsests” of antiquity (Grafton 127). These relics were not yet valued for their antiquity but as inspiration or models for the present regime.

Despite the extensive reach of the Roman Empire, most monuments from that era were destroyed or absorbed into the architecture of the middle ages. Many scholars attribute these losses to Christian proselytizing, barbaric invasions, and limited natural and economic resources (Choay; Grafton). Without knowledge of the Egyptian hieroglyphs and other “pagan visions of the world,” the monuments became “empty forms” with which to fill new ideologies, notwithstanding the fact that many medieval rulers and scholars preserved various works of ancient art and architecture that evoked a glorious past. Interest in the ancient classical arts during the Renaissance and the corresponding development of Humanism of the 15th century contributed to the conservation of monuments and architecture. The burgeoning collections of antiquities by scholars, artists, and architects would eventually develop into cabinets of curiosities (early form of museums) and correspondingly, the disciplines of archaeology, historiography, and art restoration and curation. However, it would take at least three more

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20 Pope Sixtus IV made considerable effort to relocate an Egyptian obelisk at the outskirts of Rome to its present location in St. Peter’s Square, albeit refurbished with Christian inscriptions (Grafton).
generations before the preservation of past and present accomplishments would establish the era of historic monuments (Choay 39).

Monuments and public sculptures in U.S. history emerged as national shrines in the late 18th century and served to preserve as well as commemorate historic events. Despite the 18th century’s intellectual movement of rationalism and faith in print literacy (in opposition to images and statuary), by the mid-19th century, public monuments and memorials were prominent throughout Europe and the United States. During the 19th century a “cult of monuments” spread throughout Europe (Connerton; Ricoeur) —an effect of mechanical reproduction and modernity that rendered local custom and lore obsolescent. In the 19th century, as industrialization and national wealth increased in the U.S., so too did the number of civic monuments and statues. Monuments served as forms of pedagogy, interpreting history, commemorating the losses, and healing the nation.

By the early modern era, public monuments had two primary functions: 1) to simulate the grandeur of the past through emotional effect, and 2) to provide a solid witness to the past, “the guarantor of origins” (Choay 7). The popularity of the obelisk, a neo-Classical fixture in private cemeteries and public parks and appropriated from ancient Egypt by the Western world since the Greco-Roman empires, was commensurate with the rise of the modern state (Atherton; Grafton; Davies). Historic events, including the Industrial Revolution, and the American and French Revolutions, ushered in radical breaks from the past. Monuments represented grand narratives of former regimes and secured a common history and collective memory by integrating these monuments with the present.
Contemporary monuments and memorials, including the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial or the National September 11 Memorial/Museum, also elicit emotional response, but not through the symbolic representation of a unifying grand narrative. Erika Doss explains that the projection of feelings through twenty-first century monuments and memorials exemplifies the importance of “affect” for American culture (Memorial Mania 14). Sanctioned by public art programs that increasingly assume social and moral responsibility for diverse populations, the artist/designer is encouraged to reflect on the pain of others and anticipate how an audience relates as witness to the pain (Bennett Empathic Vision).

Affect has been defined as the physical expression of emotion (Doss Memorial Mania), the public’s embodied and empathic responses to trauma (Bennett, Cvetovich), and the quality or intensity of emotion transmitted by various media including monuments and memorials (Grusin, Massumi). Although emotion is similar to affect in that both are experienced internally, emotion differs because it can be described, owned, or as Brian Massumi describes “…An emotion is subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience…” (“The Autonomy of Affect”). In contrast, affect is more like a possibility, pricked by sensations that do not yet fit into conventional wisdom. It is an intriguing concept for studying the intersection between media and trauma, as well as questioning the current interest by some museum curators in exhibits of emotion.

From Memory to Record: Ancient to Modern Archiving

The ancient archives of the Assyrians established the precedent for witnessing and providing evidence to the past as it occurred, while simultaneously modifying, appropriating, or destroying records as suited the chief leaders and scribes of the archive. Ancient monuments and
memorials could also be destroyed or appropriated by foreign powers and their original meaning and purpose forgotten. Yet, the visibility of the ancient monuments/memorials and their central location for ceremonies and other ritualized performances promised a visceral connection to the past that the archival records could not. These monuments and memorials served both private and public interests, and were instrumental in forging symbolic cultural identity. On the other hand, the archive’s systematic methods for keeping memories served not just evidentiary purposes but also established the precedents and models for monumentalizing records and preserving collective memory.

Noted archivists and scholars Terry Cook, Joan Schwartz, and Margaret Hedstrom posit the ancient archive helped establish the formation and preservation of historical and collective memories (Cook; Schwartz; Hedstrom). These scholars interpreted evidence of organization and modes of representation adopted by ancient and pre-modern “archivists,” as means for transmitting information and knowledge to future scribes, priests, and rulers. Specifically, the ancient archive established a system for classifying and accessing its records, thereby instituting a means for generating power that continues in present-day archives (Cook; Schwartz and Cook; Hedstrom). Nevertheless, the veracity of the ancient archive required oral testimony during an era when memory was the primary vehicle for transmitting knowledge.

Prior to Western culture’s widespread adoption of written language, memory experts relied on formulaic structures such as those practiced by the storytellers (Ong 37), or through the startling imagery of mnemonics, developed in ancient Greece and made popular through teaching the Ad Herennium (Yates 274). Recent archaeological discoveries of papyri stored on shelves, inscriptions upon tombs and temples, and other assorted artifacts referencing the ancient
collections and existence of archaic records convince scholars that libraries and archives were developed in the oral cultures of the Incans, and in the proto-writing and scripts of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Chinese, and Mesoamericans (Posner).

The centuries-long transition from orality (dependency on oral recitations and formulaic structures of speaking and singing) to literacy (instituting writing to recall, preserve, and distribute knowledge) extended into the early print era as classical history scholars Walter Ong and Eric Havelock explained from their studies of oral cultures. Long after writing had become established, records of ownership and other written artifacts of official transactions continued to require oral testimony and tangible objects of ownership (Ong 95). However, Ong believed libraries and archives were products of literacy, and that oracle bones, Quipu\textsuperscript{21} knots, and the Sumerian cuneiform functioned as aides-mémoire and not writing in the literate sense. Rather, the history of archives is the history of these writing, technologies developed for administrative purposes and was limited to an elite sect of scribes and priests (Webb 23).

Yet, evidence of systematic archiving by the ancient Assyrians and Sumerians, as well as non-Western ancient civilizations, challenges the idea that archives require literacy. It broadens their functions to include diverse types of institutionalized memory work. Expanding the archive’s primary function from historical record to collective memory is one of the scholarly debates that not only frames discussions of ancient civilizations but also endorses contemporary

\textsuperscript{21} The term “quipu” or “khipu” means, “knot” in Quechua, the language of the ancient Peruvians. Quipu knots were used to keep records of the governance and customs of the major cities comprising the Incan Empire. They were essentially fiber pendants, knotted at various positions and housed as collections at administrative sites or included in burial tombs (Urton “Tying the Archive in Knots”).
archives designed by and for indigenous communities. Despite the concern by archivist Kate Theimer that “digital archives” are in fact “digital collections” that do not implement archival traditions, there are common structures shared by digital repositories that define themselves as “archives” (“Archives in Context and as Context”). That is, digital archives contain multiple collections, established by the collections’ origins, subject matter, item type, and other classification schemas that are integrated into the archives by finding aids and interpretation, whereas digital collections reflect local interests and do not necessarily adhere to archival selection criteria and other classification schema.

The earliest examples of ancient archives associated with proto-writing and early scripts were established in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, where such rulers as King Ashurbanipal of Assyria, King Hammurabi of Babylonia, and the Egyptian pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (preceding the famed Library of Alexandria) reigned between 3500 and 1750 BCE (Webb; Drucker and McVarish; Too). Ancient archives were primarily used for administrative purposes and required formal education to read, interpret, and create the records. The writing materials had some influence on the type of content and storage of these records. Clay tablets were used for thousands of years in the Near East and Greco-Roman societies in which there was an abundance of this natural resource. The local geography supported clay as opposed to wood.

Ancient archives are difficult to distinguish from ancient libraries due to the fact that the content (economic transactions, sacred texts, other literary texts, genealogical lists, etc.) and methods of storage (on shelves or in rooms within temples) were similar. However, libraries could be privately owned and passed down to generations, whereas the governing city, province, or ruler owned the archives, which primarily served to provide both authority and education for future scribes and rulers. There was extensive overlapping between these two sources, however. Owners of private libraries, including Greek philosophers Theophrasus, Strato, and Aristotle reportedly sold their private book collections and left instructions for them to be copied. It was also common to restructure the contents, an example of orality and the attitude towards writing and authorship.
Papyrus was more common to ancient Egypt due to its abundance and the dry climate necessary for preserving the papyri scrolls.

The criteria for selecting ostraca, papyrus, stone tablets, or temple walls, upon which to inscribe and preserve important records is unknown, but many scholars agree that the most important records were impressed on the most permanent materials or stored in a secured, central location (Webb 22). Greece had an abundance of marble and was inclined to inscribe many documents in stone. Despite few remaining archives from the early Classical era, stone inscriptions were often excerpts or copies of archival documents and served to honor and draw public attention including important laws and decrees.

Records of land ownership, genealogies, and economic transactions were typically inscribed on papyri or potshards in the ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman civilizations and stored for future access by an elite group of scribes, priests, or rulers. Stephen Quirke, British Egyptologist, explains that Egyptian hieroglyphics, which dominated Egyptian writing from approximately 3000 BCE to the Roman period (30 BC), were primarily designed for communicating knowledge and worldviews. When fused with formal art (evidenced by the standardized arrangement of the hieroglyphics), the content was generally sacred and located in tombs and temples. Calligraphic script was commonly used for manuscripts and treatises, inscribed on papyri, ostraca, or stone (Quirke). Similarly, the lettering, script, imagery, and

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23 Ostraca refers to limestone fragments used for recording informal writing (UCL; Webb).
materials used by the ancient Greeks to document events varied according to the artifact’s purpose and intended audience.

It is thus apparent that well-organized, large, ancient civilizations required methods of storing, preserving, and disseminating memories deemed important for the stability and harmony of society. Archaeological discoveries include genealogies of rulers, calendars of events, sacred lore, and administrative recordkeeping represented in the collections of clay tablets, inscribed on stone and temple walls of the ancient Near East, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman civilizations, otherwise represented through material artifacts including the Incan quipus and the Chinese oracle bones (Posner; Brosius). The development of record keeping on the vast scale from which the Assyrians, Sumerians, Pharaonic Egyptians, and Greco-Romans established their schools and bureaucratic administrations is strikingly similar to contemporary post-industrial societies (Posner; Brosius). Many of the ancient principles of preserving and disseminating memories are embedded in contemporary archival practices and the aesthetics of memorials. They include: systematic divisions and ordering between documents of varying purposes (administration of government, commercial transactions, information for public consumption), and varying sites, surfaces, and design elements that differentiate state power from private transactions. For example, inscriptions recorded on inner tomb walls were written by and for scribes, priests, and rulers. Writing on broken pottery shards was intended for personal and everyday consumption).

In the ancient world, archives were connected to the local centers of power, whether these centers resided in the memories of the tribal chief or in the home of the ancient Greek archon/magistrate. The cultural importance of the ancient archive is evidenced by social relationships and kinships recorded in the scrolls and temple walls, including the identities of
“archivist” scribes. The content of the records, the materials used to create them, and the skill with which they are produced suggests there were varying degrees of literacy, expertise, and levels of access to the archives, not exclusive to the “archons.”

Evidence gathered at the sites of many ancient civilizations also supports the existence of both public and private “archives” and libraries, predating alphabetic literacy. These ancient records are examples of proto-writing, such as cuneiform and hieroglyphics. Mesopotamian clay seals located in present-day Iraq featuring symbols (cuneiform) are associated with recording and administering agricultural transactions (Drucker and McVarish 15-16; Ong 85). These marks did not yet establish a “graphic expression of language” (Drucker and McVarish 12), but they represented a systematic method of recording commerce. Jacques Derrida attributes these early archival principles to the archon’s power, manifested by the “…functions of unification, of identification, of classification…” (Archive Fever 3) These multiple acts of gathering, naming, and organizing the memories comprise the structure as well as purpose of the archive—the “power of consignation” (3). Once instituted, these structures continue to inform future archival contents, even when the technologies of inscribing memory evolves. Although modern archive history begins with print literacy and the formation of France’s new government, the First Republic (Millar 28; Cook 501), Derrida abstracts the “archontic” principle (the archiving impulse) that fuels contemporary archives from ancient Greek and Hebrew origins (Archive Fever).

After the decline of the Roman Empire and before the establishment of modern archives, the well-established archival systems of the ancient Greeks and Romans were destroyed. Not until the 11th and 12th centuries were archives established in Europe. The large landholdings of
monasteries and monarchs required administrative record keeping, and the Church and European monarchies developed archives and archival systems unique to their respective institutions. By the 13th and 14th centuries, municipal archives were more common and citizen legal transactions, including marriages and wills were documented and preserved in local public records offices. A few large repositories were formed during the 16th and early 17th centuries in Spain, England, and the Vatican, but there was, as yet, no standardization of archiving practices (Duchein 15-16). The medieval archives served primarily to support the current legal transactions, ownership, and lineage of the ruling powers.

Modern state archives, including official and private correspondences and economic and legal transactions, developed from a collective recognition of their historic value—their cultural patrimony (Ketelaar, “Muniments and monuments” 344). That is, archival records became monumentalized (symbols of cultural heritage) when their everyday functional value was replaced by their authenticity as registries of the past. According to Eric Ketelaar, the Dutch antiquarians of the mid-17th century designated documents having historical value, monumenta. Written documents were increasingly valued for their future enlightenment as well as evidence, intimating a growing awareness of the archive’s role of cultural patrimony (347). Ketelaar believes the archives held by private citizens (particularly the nobility) first exhibited a “patrimony consciousness” that assigned historical, evidentiary, and long-term value to family-owned manuscripts and other memorabilia (349). By the late 18th century, the “patrimony consciousness” would be absorbed into the national archives.

The realization that current business records would serve the public not merely as evidentiary proofs, but as valued, cultural and national assets was not fully established in the
United States until the late 19th century (Ketelaar 343). Records and documents of the nation’s governance and history were stored in separate state and governmental agency archives. The idea of establishing a centralized location and institution for the nation’s archives developed slowly and the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration was not established until 1934 (NARA).

The association of archives with sovereign power is based not only on the location and content of the documents that authenticate governing authority, but also on the privilege of accessing the archive, determined by education, literacy, and the relationships to the sovereign (Jimerson). The modern archives that developed in the aftermath of the French Revolution correspond with the growth of nation-states and the rise of capitalism (Foucault; Haskins; and Millar). Archivist Laura Millar credits the late 18th and early 19th century scholars and their quest to obtain primary historical sources as impetus for opening the official archives to public access. Increasing disciplinary specialization and shifting cultural attitudes informed by rationalism and scientific thought defined this era. Modern institutions such as archives were structured and governed by scientific principles – classifying and coding their respective subjects and objects of interest (Foucault The Archaeology of Knowledge). Gaining access was not limited by affiliation with the sovereign so much as it was determined by disciplinary knowledge.

The archival principles, provenance, original order, and respect des fonds were developed to establish uniform standards and secure the authenticity of the historic record.

24 Anthropologist Giancarlo Scoditti understood indigenous tribes of Papua New Guinea assigned specific families to preserve and maintain the tribal memories. These families were part of the provenance and assured the authenticity of the circulating memories and myths. As modernization infiltrated the islands, Scoditti gradually
Articulated as objective and methodical in its performance of duties, the modern archive attempted to situate and categorize the past as if historic truth could be ascertained from the documents themselves. However, Foucault stated that these assumptions of practicality and self-evident normalcy obscure the political power of the archive, particularly where the regulation and operations of the institution rationalize oppression or marginalization of others.25 Foucault also recognized the dynamism of archives and their function to mediate between language (and all its possibilities and regulations, constructed through various discourses and social settings) and the “corpus,” (the body of work that supports a particular discourse). The archive produces a multiplicity of “statements” (documents, classifications, methods, etc.) that define events and simultaneously, reveal the rules of discourse, including how language is used to set us apart in time and space (131). Thus, the archive (as modern institution) provides a metadiscourse for uncovering the complex relations between individuals and society, despite its origins in positivism and scientific discourse.

As a metadiscourse of cultural memory, the disaster archive combines the tasks (memory work) of monumentalizing and memorializing. In this context, monumentalizing refers to the creation and documentation of historic records, jointly produced by an archiving team of experts and the public. Memorializing refers to the emerging conventions of online public mourning, including oral histories, testimonials, spontaneous shrines, and limited curation of the archive’s

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25 Foucault observes how the tenets of social Darwinism enabled the justification of racism and the irrationality of Nazism (“Space, Knowledge, and Power” 249).
collection. Historical documentation converges with memorialization and creates a metadiscourse on memory, history, and trauma. How we remember and share our memories are the stuff of disaster archives—monumentalizing disaster through image-texts and public participation—whose antecedents can be found in ancient monuments and memorials.

**Summary**

The development of writing integrated the civic function of monuments and state archives with collective memory practices, but did not replace oral customs and the use of mnemonics. From inscriptions on monuments and official edifices to written records stored in public and personal archives, the fonts, styles, and materials used were purposefully selected according to purpose and audience. Although the systematic organization of an ancient society’s most important transactions and belief systems did not require alphabetic literacy—evidenced by the cuneiform tablets in the ancient Near Eastern civilizations or by the ancient Peruvian Quipu knots— the advancement of writing, artistic expression, and architecture that strengthened the cultural and patrimonial heritage of early civilizations.

In addition to establishing aesthetic models and systems for monumentalizing and preserving important cultural memories, the early history of these heritage institutions also revealed an overall lack of historical consciousness. The fluidity with which the Egyptians and Romans “grafted” monuments from ancient Greece, and the obsession for acquiring and copying Egyptian obelisks by Europe and the United States during the 18th century, demonstrates separate understanding of antiquities and historical preservation than developed in late 18th and early 19th centuries. The development of historical consciousness—the awareness that the art, architecture, customs, and beliefs of previous generations cannot be remembered or recreated as
present phenomena – sparked interest in preservation and documentation of not only the past, but also of the present. Corresponding to the development of historical consciousness was the imagined community (Anderson), and the proliferation of national monuments, bureaucracies, and state archives. The consequences of homogenizing societies through controlling the representation and expression of cultural memories have obviously been detrimental to the disenfranchised.

In the next chapter, I assess contemporary theories and schools of criticism that inform the study of monuments, memorials, and archives. These scholarly perspectives include: deconstruction of cultural heritage objects, collective memory, and socio-cultural and technical studies of media. Deconstruction of memorials and archives approaches the subjects of study as “texts” or “performance,” and is relevant for the critical examination of disaster archives. Collective memory studies investigate relationships between individual and social memory. Archival scholarship in the last decade has increasingly focused on the study of collective memory (McKemmish and Gilliland 83). Scholarship in media studies augments our understanding of digital technologies and illuminates both their socio-cultural and “machinic,” database logics. I summarize the chapter with an examination of the contested politics of collective memory, demonstrating the dynamic nature of monuments, memorials, and archives and establishing a foundation for critiquing and building digital memorial/archives.
CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL THEORIES AND ISSUES RELATED TO COMMEMORATING TRAUMATIC EVENTS

“Monuments have been going postmodern for decades; they are now living sites of personal and collective wisdom, growing and changing as participants engage with them by adding data, personal stories, and reactions”

Barry Mauer, “Oracles and Divinations”

The digitization of monuments, memorials, and archives enables a wider swath of the public to participate in the construction of collective memory. No longer the exclusive province of archivists, curators, and historians, digital collections of historic and cultural value are being created and disseminated by non-experts. In contrast to the modernist principles of history as positive progressions in time, and authority given to grand narratives (defining the essential or singular cause/event), the postmodern ideals of distributed authority and competing narratives are realized in digital archive/memorials. Multiple perspectives of a singular event circulate through social media and the Internet, while a single image may represent multiple events and assume multiple meanings as it circulates through media networks. The stability of an object’s meaning and the fixed context of its circulation are thus destabilized in digital media. As we archive our digital memories and make them accessible through participatory archives and online monuments/memorials, we are contributing to this fragmentation of collective memory.

In this chapter, I present critical perspectives representing postmodern theorists, communications and media scholars, and proponents of collective memory studies. These perspectives are organized by three overarching fields of study, although the methods of research
within each field may vary widely: 1) Critical cultural analysis – application of postmodern methods of deconstruction and semiotics; 2) Collective memory studies - given the premise that memory is historically and culturally informed; and 3) Digital media and communications - analyzing the emerging socio-technical conventions of media technologies. Although these scholarly divisions often overlap and are somewhat arbitrarily divided, the reviewed scholarship affirms the dynamic nature of monuments, memorials, and archives, thereby establishing the foundation for critiquing and building digital memorial/archives.

To begin the analysis of monuments and memorials—drilling down into the sub-texts that inspire the creation of monuments and memorials and render them meaningful—I draw methodology from the postmodern theories of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, among others. Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault interrogated linguistic and historical subjects as texts or disciplines, analyzed their terminology, and discovered that within the disciplines and practices of writing, semiotic codes or sub-texts operated beneath commonplace statements. By extension, monuments and memorials are constructions of image/texts rendered meaningful by what their symbology both represents and omits.

Many archive and memorial scholars additionally draw theoretical grounding from the study of memory, inspired by the works of Sigmund Freud, Maurice Halbwachs, and Pierre Nora. Their influence is noted in this literature review of current scholarship in archives, monuments, and memorials. These cultural heritage institutions are often defined as sources and shapers of collective memory, a field of study that derives its theoretical underpinnings from psychology and history. Archive, memorial, and history scholars Verne Harris, Erika Doss, and Kerwin Klein, respectively, are among many who believe “memory” has replaced “history” as
the means for studying cultural heritage, and that our understanding and interpretations of the past include family stories, material artifacts, and monuments and memorials, not just official, written documents.

In this dissertation, I define memory as a social, cultural phenomenon that mediates past experiences through public ritual and social discourse. Memory as collective and cultural, frames past events and sensory impressions through public performances that, in turn, are triggered by material objects, architectures, or places of historic value. Memory, thus, serves as an affective conduit between individual and public identity and is a more fluid and unstable concept than that of history.

By comparison, I define history as being both a humanistic and social scientific discipline, constructing narratives from empirical evidence and collections of memories. History provides distanced perspectives that permit conceptual separation between events and continuity through time; it is a discourse of origins and effects, and of discovering universal truths. This is not to say that history necessarily attains truth, or that memory is not concerned with truth. Both history and memory are interpretive acts subject to distortion, however sincere or authentic each may be. Nevertheless, for researching disaster archives and determining how their dual functions to preserve history and promote healing are affecting archival practices, I distinguish history (or historical consciousness) from memory. History is evidenced by references to future understanding, to discerning truth (if not now, then at some point in the future). Memory, in contrast, is used to identify the individual and collective effects of the traumatic event. That is, the visual evidence and oral histories of shared memories provide future audiences the sensory
experiences (evidence of both external conditions and individual emotions) from which to remember. Thus, history and memory function as complementary and interdependent disciplines.

In an era of ever-expanding computer memory and public participation in digitally recording and disseminating the most banal incidents of life, it is evident that memory, as both metaphor and source of historical knowledge, may be a more apt description of digital archives, than history. Still, the concepts of history and historical consciousness provide context and meaning to the disparate and fragmented memories stored in the archive. Disaster archives, focused as they are on providing not only a repository for collective memories but also on educating and “healing” traumatized communities, incorporate historical methods (interpretations provided in exhibits or timelines, for example) as well as providing access to publicly shared memories. The question remains, however, how to address the effects of media and digitization on historicizing and remembering traumatic events. For ascertaining the socio-technical dimensions of disaster archives, I refer to media studies.

Scholarship in media studies, including the database aesthetics detailed by Lev Manovich and the more recent developments in media archaeology by Wolfgang Ernst, proffers a third means of critically examining monuments, memorials, and archives. Media studies examine the aesthetics of databases, the nature and extent of interactivity, and various socio-technical affordances of digital networks. Whether narrowly focused on media’s technical aspects of recording and storage or on the cultural and pedagogical implications of media’s interactivity, the object of study is media, rather than history or memory. The medium-specific scholarship of Manovich, Galloway, and Ernst, for example, investigates the transcoding of empirical data and analog media into digital forms. Through the automated and technical processes of electronic and
digital media, these scholars determine how media shapes (as much as it is shaped by) society. The driving aesthetic and ideology of our era is dependent upon the algorithmic requirements and technical maintenance of computing—the database aesthetic of a “control society.”

Other visual culture and media scholars, including Erika Doss, Richard Grusin, and Henry Jenkins, interrogate digital media as agents of pedagogy, government control, and prosumer logic, drawing theory and method from aesthetics, culture studies, and ethnography. Questioning the social and political impact of media technologies, particularly of social networks and mobile media, illuminates ethical issues regarding personal freedoms and identities, global capitalism, and environmental resilience. Raising awareness of how we, as a society, track, share, consume, and preserve our cultural heritage promotes political activism. This is not to say that media archaeology or software analytics do not also present political opportunities. As with the socio-cultural perspective, media archaeologists promote unfettered access to information, yet employ non-narrative methods for enlightening us as to how various machine logics become absorbed into (or produce) social and cultural life. Altogether, media studies contribute to the design and planned outreach of a digital disaster archive by addressing ethical as well as aesthetic implications of its design.

26 Foucault writes extensively of disciplines of control in several of his works, including his essays on Panopticism and Bio-power. Discipline encompasses instruments of socialization and medical health, such that “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (“The Means of Correct Training” 188).
Critical Theory and Cultural Studies

The loss of faith in fixed order and stability is, of course, associated with late modernity and postmodern thought. Belief in rationalism, the application of science and technology to commerce and governance, and the subsequent rise of capitalism and nationalism that ushered in modernity were steadily eroded by the catastrophic events of the 20th century. Critical theory, introduced by the Frankfurt School, represented by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin and others, and the structural semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes addressed the failures and promises of modern society. These intellectual movements are among the most influential in shaping contemporary, scholarly discourses on cultural heritage.

One of the more influential disciplines that developed out of the Frankfurt School and fundamental for examining cultural heritage, was apprehending the aesthetics of popular culture—the critical study of relationships between art, politics, and society. Adorno and Benjamin adapted Marxist tenets of labor and production to their respective studies of mass media and popular culture, reimagining a dialectical as opposed to a historical narrative interpretation of cultural phenomena. Adorno scathingly described the collusion between industry, entertainment, and politics as an “inflexible style” of “unending sameness” that manufactured and perpetuated cultural stereotypes in support of the dominant economic/political ideology (“The Culture Industry”). Reacting against Nazism and the rampant postwar capitalism evident in the American film industry, Adorno promoted a dialectical method of critiquing mass-produced popular culture. His oft-quoted statement, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric…” generated questions and doubts regarding the representation or memorialization of
traumatic events ("Cultural Criticism," 34). To produce something of beauty or of aesthetic value might also honor the crime or promote its commercialization—a trivialization of the subject.

Like Adorno, Benjamin also perceived the Fascist manipulation of the masses by glorifying its ideology through film art. Yet, Benjamin suggested it was the coupling of mythical beliefs and ritualized behavior (such as promoting celebrity worship through fan clubs) that enabled fascist exploitation of the masses through popular film. Benjamin averred that film also provided the potential for generating mass awareness and counterrevolutionary politics against fascism. Would that mass audiences use their knowledge of the technologies of perception, gained from viewing film, to question the ideologies of the producers! In other words, the mass audience perceives the cinematic techniques for framing, producing, and manipulating what is seen in the film, but heretofore unrecognized or unassimilated. The audience sees more than merely the subject matter of the film, and in the process, learns how to critique as well as respond to a film. Consequently, the viewer becomes somewhat of an expert that according to Benjamin could potentially "understand themselves and therefore their class" (Work of Art, XIII).

In comparison, digital media technologies and social networks extend film’s social activist potential by enabling audience participation and making it easier for the masses to acquire cultural capital—a “prosumer” phenomenon that was, perhaps, imagined by Benjamin.27

27 Ironically, Benjamin’s belief that mass reproduction would eliminate the fetishistic, ritualized behavior associated with an art object’s “aura” has been restored by digitization and consumer manipulations. The aura of a digitized image is manifested through its infinite replication, imitation, multiple vantage points, and repetition (Pinchevski and Frosh). That is, the singularity of an event is enhanced by its innumerable iterations and presentations, as occurred on September 11, 2001.
The concept that entertainment and politics converge in mass media and that the aesthetics of any cultural artifact, including monuments and memorials, should be considered a political statement is evident in contemporary critics of visual culture and media.

Adorno’s premise that capitalist technologies become embedded in politics and popular culture, and that the moguls of media and entertainment manipulate the ideological beliefs and lifestyles of the masses, are further developed in Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*. The “spectacle” operates in modern, industrialized societies where the relentless stream of images, removed from reality, supplants critical thought with passive consumption. The spectator as passive consumer has no choice, as all aspects of culture are subject to production costs, distribution, and eventually, consumption. “In all its particular manifestations—news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment—the spectacle represents the dominant model of life” ("Society of the Spectacle," sec. 6). Although Debord insists the spectacle is more than “mere images,” the predominant technologies used to maintain a commodified culture are visual.

In the postwar years, semiotics and structural linguistics complemented the Frankfurt School’s sociological and political examination of culture. Deconstructing the text through

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28 Critics of the first public commemorations of the September 11 attacks describe the ritualistic repetition of speeches and nationalistic iconography as “spectacle”—aestheticizing politics. Kathryn Mitchell explains that the “spectacle” enables the “suturing” that melds public monuments and collective memory with hegemonic state politics (450). The commemorative speeches and dramatic concert-like lighting, performed against the backdrop of the Statue of Liberty, is an example of the spectacle in service of the nation-state. The staging of anniversaries and commemorative events in cities and at public monuments (fixed sites) forges collective memory through powerful emotion and sensations. Yet, the disaster of 9/11 has been described as a spectacle, in itself. Jean Baudrillard described the terrorist attack as an “event” and “a more-than-real-death: symbolic and sacrificial death—the absolute, no appeal event” (“Spirit of Terrorism”). Many American intellectuals swiftly denounced his comments regarding the “dream” everyone shared of the World Trade Center’s destruction, and proven by America’s popularity of disaster movies. Despite what appeared to be Baudrillard’s disregard for the very real deaths and traumas caused by the 9/11 attacks, he credited the terrorist’s mastery of the spectacle—their knowledge of media networks and symbolic imagery ingrained in modern life.
dialectic argument and linguistic analysis may be the most influential principle that generated the critical study of monuments, memorials, and archives in the late twentieth century. Deconstruction destabilizes the text, illuminates systematic control over various forms of expression, and rejects the “narrative logic” used to write history. Barthes applied a semiotic analysis of text, image, and music without subscribing to a fixed superstructure of meaning, as did his predecessors Claude Levi-Strauss and Fernand de Saussure. Barthes’ deconstructions identified layers of cultural codes including the ambiguities within a work, thereby enabling or requiring a reader to interject multiple possible interpretations. Thus, the “punctum” of an image, for example, could conjure the reader’s various memories through its emotional affects and produce a meaning beyond its conventional codes (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 115). Awareness of one’s perception of the world—understanding how we assign meaning and value through our culturally coded language—enables the critical reader to perceive not only political and ideological undertones, but also the curious, nameless, obtuse meanings that can trigger sudden laughter or pangs of anxiety.

If everything becomes meaningful through the interpretation of linguistic and symbolic codes, is there any “text” that exists beyond language? Although Barthes introduces “third meanings” as the space for inventing or assigning words, he asserts all cognition derives from language. Even trauma, which “is a suspension of language,” is conveyed or represented through language (Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* 30). The photograph of a shocking event includes the connotation of photographing the event, even if there are no words immediately available with which to describe the event, itself. Consequently, I examined the disaster archive collections of images and their juxtaposition to other images and texts for indicators of irony, metaphor, and
chance associations. For example, although the subject matter and content of the photograph of a woman descending the steps from her apartment (Figure 26: Elena Agapie “Photo of woman”) referenced the lockdown following the Boston Marathon bombings, I was reminded of Duchamp’s “Nude descending the staircase.” The similarity in composition of both women in their descent down the stairs was a superficial similarity, but the bare feet of the female resident of a Watertown apartment conjured vulnerability and objectification, which at some (punctum) level, I associated with Duchamp’s model.

Barthes’ semiotics of the image enables the viewer to move past the evidentiary, transparent, and indexical functions of photographs, yet many visual culture and literary critics augment his method by probing the social context of image production and its genealogy. In his text, Picture Theory, W.J.T. Mitchell investigates pictorial logic. He contrasts the photographic essays of Walker Evans and Robert Frank, for example, to demonstrate that the language of photography and the language of its content are never purely representative of the other. Mitchell advocates an ethical approach to viewing and critiquing images and states, “the power/knowledge quotient of contemporary visual culture, of non-discursive orders of representation, is too palpable, too deeply embedded in technologies of desire, domination, and violence, too saturated with reminders of neo facism and global corporate culture to be ignored” (24).

Gregory Ulmer also adapts Barthes’ semiotics to his pedagogical scholarship, using such concepts as the “punctum” to elicit self-awareness and enable recognition of one’s interpellation into society. Through Ulmer’s invention, the “MEmorial” he creates associations between personal experiences and institutional, cultural forces that reveal a connection between global
and personal disasters (xv-xvi). Another Barthes’ concept, instrumental in the methodology and pedagogy of Barry Mauer, is the “third meaning” of an image—that which is undetermined, lacking sufficient definition and context, or inaccessible to language. The third meaning exceeds signification and may produce unease due to its uncertain meaning. Mauer promotes sampling and remixing media for the purposes of re-contextualizing and destabilizing popular ideas and beliefs (“Rigorous Infidelity”). Poetic devices and cultural codes operate differently when the work’s elements or generic associations are altered.

Ulmer, Mauer, and Mitchell complicate the normalization of images (their simplification and neutral abstractions) by challenging conventional means for consuming and interpreting media. Jacques Rancière also explores the nature of images through their artistic operations and social functions. He argues that the linguistic function of images—the construction of meaning through semiotic, linguistic structures—does not explain how they perform distinct social and cultural functions. Rancière explains there are three types of images: 1) naked (without artifice or rhetoric); 2) ostensive (meaning is asserted through its history, genre, and tradition); and 3) metaphoric (self-reflexive, interactive). Yet, meaningful interpretation or criticism of each type is not fixed. Rather, Rancière suggests each type requires some form of interaction, such as witnessing a trauma through viewing a news photo. Ostensive images engage parody as well as honor and exhibits of elusive, metaphoric works require curation and interpretation. An aesthetic image may work as a “cipher of history” or as an “interruption” (Rancière 25). Knowing that the collaborating team of archivists, curators, institutional sponsors, and content donors cannot stabilize the images and other items in the collection does not mean that no attempt should be made to proclaim an historical or provocative motive. In my Omeka prototype for exhibiting the
dimensions of disaster archive/memorials, the data from my research includes images and texts related by tags (keywords) and item types, as opposed to subject headings or collections. The decision for adopting a less conventional means for relating items was to foreground the dimensions of mourning and archiving I discerned from my research. I linked the images and texts to multiple dimensions to make my interpretations transparent while providing some measure of interaction with the website.

Postmodern Archives: Foucauldian and Derridean Influences

Although Foucault resisted being called a structuralist or postmodernist, his archaeology of human knowledge used to decipher the emerging modernism that rippled throughout late 18th century schools of thought and reconstituted ways of knowing through rational, disciplined practices, inspires noted archivists to frame their discipline as postmodern\(^{29}\). The emerging disciplines of knowledge in the early modern era described by Foucault as epistemes, were specialized language and attitudes informed by rationalism and scientific thought and “normalized” through social and educational practices. Foucault believes “…there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge…” (Order of Things 168). Modern institutions such as archives were structured and governed by scientific principles – classifying and coding their respective subjects and objects of interest, while serving the interests of the state. Foucault states that these assumptions of practicality and self-evident

\(^{29}\) For an excellent overview of Postmodernism and examples of archival practices modified by postmodern ideas, see the articles by Cook, Greene, Hedstrom, Jimerson, and Nesmith included in the List of References.
normalcy obscure the political power and hierarchies of social relations, particularly where the regulation and operations of the institution rationalize oppression or marginalization of others.

However, Foucault also recognized the dynamism of archives and its mediation between language (and all its possibilities and regulations, constructed through various discourses and social settings) and the “corpus,” (the body of work that supports a particular discourse). The archive produces a multiplicity of “statements” (documents, classifications, methods, etc.) that define events and simultaneously, reveal the rules of discourse, including how language is used to set us apart in time and space (The Archaeology of Knowledge 131). Thus, the archive (as modern institution) provides a metadiscourse for uncovering the complex relations between individuals and society, despite its origins in positivism and scientific discourse.

Foucault’s “regulations,” derived from disciplinary practices and the associated discourses that determine what is included and excluded, provide both contemporary archivists and media scholars a basis for theorizing the dynamism of archives. Noted Canadian archivist Terry Cook cites Foucault when explaining the paradigm-shift taking place in contemporary archives. The archive profession, grounded in 19th century ideas and beliefs in scientific objectivity and the assumed neutrality of the documents and their assigned categories, now rejects the possibility of establishing truth statements from material evidence and the credibility of centralized authority (Cook 524). Postmodern archivists, including Cook, Harris, and Ketelaar interrogate archival selection policies that focus on dominant cultural groups. Their studies include examination of archival policies, the apartheid South African government, and the critical shifts in archival science, respectively. Documenting and interpreting the past occur in social and political contexts and are therefore, dialogic and reflect various positions of hegemony
and marginality (Ivacs). Knowing that archival classifications and policies are socially constructed, embedded power structures has resulted in self-reflective and comprehensive collections (McKemmish and Gilliland).

Foucault’s argument that the archive exists as a system of “distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities,” helps lay the foundation for media studies and theories of automaticity and self-regulation (The Archaeology of Knowledge 129). Media scholars Amit Pinchevski and Wolfgang Ernst refer to Foucault when explaining their rationale for avoiding historicism (narrative-based methods of understanding media’s effects on human thought and society) and seeking, instead, to reveal slips and gaps in technical processes and performances that produce effects in society ⁴. Media theorists argue that describing the historical and socio-cultural context of media as if these dynamic technologies were neutral containers having no effect on thought and expression, is inadequate at best and politically suspect at worse. To get as close to the technology as is possible requires adopting the language as well as gaining familiarity with the medium’s functions, protocols, and elements.

Jacques Derrida destabilized the “text” even further by demonstrating the constructed basis of language and by challenging the absolutism in binary oppositions. Derrida’s deconstruction of binary oppositions, such as presence/absence and remember/forget, often lead to a “both/and” paradox. Upon the deaths of his close friends, Derrida described the paradox of

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³⁰See Pinchevski’s article, “The Audiovisual Unconscious” and Wolfgang Ernst’s text, Digital Memory and the Archive.
speaking of and for the dead. He explained a measure of his fidelity was to take his friend “into oneself”…to identify with him in order to let him speak within oneself, to make him present and faithfully to represent him” (The Work of Mourning 38). This absorption and fusion of friend with self necessarily reduced each other and risked reciting funereal platitudes or narcissistic recollections. Yet, Derrida added that to not speak of a friend’s death would be more destructive.

Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of binary oppositions has been particularly influential on archivists. He illuminated the paradoxes in archiving, at once inscribing memory and forgetting the past, as being both “…institutive and conservative…revolutionary and traditional” (Archive Fever 4). Those whose memories and status were preserved, and all other possible inclusions of those who were not, comprises an “economy” —exchanges between society and its institutions, shaped and regulated by its technical structures (including the history of writing). To inscribe is to write history, and to archive history is not merely to store memories, but to classify and systematically control future expressions of the past.

Contemporary archivists revisit past collections and methods of collecting the past as interdependent entities or exchanges underlying a larger system or economy of political power. Among many archivists, noted Verne Harris cites Derrida’s rejection of binary arguments, such as opposing subject/object or dominant/repressed, as ethical principles for archiving in a postmodern and postcolonial world. In his investigation of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Committee and its corresponding archive, Harris reports instances of forgotten and repressed memories by state institutions. Adopting Derrida’s deconstruction of texts, Harris illuminated the political and social contexts embedded in the categories and principles governing the South African National Archives (“The Archival Sliver”). Harris also advocates inclusion of
the “other”—the binary opposition that masks larger systems of oppression and all other possible significations of larger or smaller phenomena (“Genres of the trace”). Because systematic, institutionalized racism exists in the very naming (consignation) of what, how, and of whom archival documents are preserved, community archivists attempt to include marginalized populations in the documentation and preservation of their history (Bastian, et.al).

Derrida’s concept of consignation (power derived from “naming”) and method of deconstructing binary oppositions are cited not only by archivists, but also by historians, literary, film and media scholars, and cultural critics, all too many to list in this dissertation. Moreover, even when postmodernism fails scholars as a framework for analysis, many of its tenets and logical assumptions (including discussion of the underlying substrate of all texts and languages), are evident in discourses on digital and participatory media (Galloway; Jenkins). Whether engaging in social activism through the construction of participatory archives (Bastian, et.al. Harris, Flinn), or designing database schemas from natural life and user-centered perspectives (Galloway), the precedence for deconstruction of categories and processes generates policies of greater self-reflection and transparency in the contemporary archive.

**Collective and Cultural Memory Studies**

Archive scholars believe an in-depth understanding of memory provides a more relevant and critical basis for creating and managing digital archives.\(^{31}\) Rather than establish archival practices and theory around the historical record, these scholars argue for centering the archive

\(^{31}\) See the articles written by archivists Laura Millar, Barbara J. Craig, Margaret Hedstrom, Eric Ketelaar, and Brien Brothman included in the List of References. Each archivist presents a rationale for adopting memory studies for developing policies they believe are more amenable to digital and community archives.
on the dynamic concept of memory. That is, when archives are defined as memory institutions, as opposed to historical institutions, archival collections become open to non-traditional formats and the archival policies, which were instituted to preserve the origins and sanctity of documents and other ephemera, adjust to the new metaphor. Memories previously discounted from official records and records that function like memory, capable of being retrieved and used at any time or in any sequence, are just two examples of adapting memory studies to archival practice.

Memory studies also appeal to museum curators and preservationists who strive to represent those whose memories have been marginalized, forgotten, or repressed (Conley-Zilkic and Gillette; Jennings and McConnell; Norris and Ostrovska). The duty to remember is an ethical response by archives and museums that have traditionally represented only the dominant powers. Memory as the object and metaphor also relates better to historicizing traumatic events. Memory is affective, emotional, and not dependent on facts or linear time. When recounting and documenting traumatic events, individual memories elicit empathy and help establish a collective memory and means for witnessing.

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is credited with inventing the term “collective memory” to describe the group experience of shared memories. Collective memory is formed out of a group’s shared memories and relationships. Similar in concept to enculturation and socialization, collective memory works through a given group’s shared and related memories, changing over time while sustaining group, cultural identity. Individual memories assume their “shape” and significance from this “social framework” (Weedon and Jordan). Freud’s theory of memory sharply contrasts with Halbwachs’, which states that religion and cultural traditions derive from repressed and forgotten traumas from the early tribal origins.
Corresponding to individual memories that lie intact but remain buried and fragmented within the unconscious, the collective memory is manifested through rituals (repetitious acts) that recreate the conditions of the original trauma, as exemplified by the Jewish people’s revolt against Moses as theorized by Freud (*Moses and Monotheism*).

The late French historian Pierre Nora agreed with Halbwachs that pre-modern societies had an intimate, immediate relationship with the past that modern societies, dependent on history and the historic record, lacked. With the institution of mass culture and subsequent loss of indigenous, minority cultures, modern society relies on history to reconstruct collective memory instead of tradition—“…Nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces” (Nora 8). Memory, described as “magical” and “eternally present,” is diametrically opposed to history, which represents rather than performs the past. Nora describes collective memory as the product of generations of cumulative histories of place and lore. Modern memory is archival. “The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past” (13).

The traces of memory that exist in “museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, [and] and fraternal orders…” comprise *les lieux de mémoire*. These structures and performances of cultural memory are actually remnants of an historical age in which collective memories were instilled through family and community traditions. Nora compares the function of such lieux de mémoire to the manic desire to record and preserve the present for posterity.
“Even as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged assiduously to collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been, as if this burgeoning dossier were to be called upon to furnish some proof to who knows what tribunal of history” (Nora 13-14).

The theories of Halbwachs and Nora continue to influence the historical and socio-cultural study of memory (Hedstrom; Weedon and Jordan) despite their limited interrogation of how individual and group memories come into being. Many scholars have since subdivided group memory as inter or trans-generational, exemplified by the memory studies of the children of Holocaust survivors (Hirsch). Others suggest the emotional effects of collective memory produced through public performances (e.g. media, exhibits) are better indicators of how collective memory is constructed (Huyssen; Ketelaar “Sharing: Collected Memories”; Millar “Touchstones”). Andreas Huyssen claims the modernist view of collective memory as a stable aggregation and coalescence of social and group memories, is not tenable in our era of digital media and multiple ways of viewing effects of time, culture, and forgetting. One of the effects of the globalization of economics and media is in the local and national responses to catastrophic events. The usurpation of local memory and mourning by national “memory debates” can be seen, for example, in the social media and broadcast media responses to the shooting at Charlie Hebdo and the murders at the Emanuel A.M.E. church. Huyssen points out that this “media memory” is insufficient for addressing the political and economic issues interwoven in traumatic events.

32 In a comment posted in the online French publication, L’Obs Monde, a comparison is made between Islamist and racist terrorism by relating the Charleston murders to those at Charlie Hebdo. "C'est sans nul doute l’acte d'un islamiste..."L'extrême droite est une grande famille. Les 7/8/9 janvier 2015 en plein Paris, c'était qui?"
events. “Public memory discourses” including legal institutions and spontaneous memorials provide the spaces for observing and participating in the dynamic construction of memory.

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur also observes trauma through individual and collective memory. He explains that large groups experiencing trauma, either work through or act out memories comparable to individual processes of memory. Unlike Halbwachs and Nora, Ricoeur does not bifurcate the individual from community or history from memory; rather, he prefers to see how these phenomena relate to the past. “History can expand, complete, correct, even refute the testimony of memory regarding the past; it cannot abolish it. Why? Because, it seemed to us, memory remains the guardian of the ultimate dialectic constitutive of the pastness of the past, namely, the relation between the ‘no longer,’ which marks its character of being elapsed, abolished, superseded, and the ‘having-been,’ which designates its original and, in this sense, indestructible character” (Ricoeur 7418-7420).

According to Ricoeur, memory was once the only acceptable means of establishing providence and authentic witnessing. The replacement of oral testimony with written documentation does not negate memory, but rather incorporates it as “part of history” (5750). On the other hand, he suggests history adopts its many imagined narratives according to how memory works in present culture. Ricoeur stresses the importance of remembering history, of using history to augment memory, and applying ethics to both writing history and sharing memories.

In response to the postmodern resistance to narrative and an increased understanding of computer memory, archives appear to be less historical documentation and more shapers or
metaphors of collective memory. Although it may be an over-simplification to distinguish the concepts “history” and “memory” as oppositional, history is archival and documents the past, whereas memory is ahistorical, embodied, and sacred. Modern archives are traditionally associated with a progressive and linear construction of history (fixed points of space and time, established through written and oral testimony) that is necessarily opposed to memory, which recreates the past through unstable, sensory triggers and artifices.

**Media Studies**

I introduced memory studies to establish the archive’s value to society as both a metaphor and as an ideological framework for examining archive policies. I now add media studies for evaluating the archive’s contents and determining how its structures shape meaning. Media Studies comprise multiple disciplines and methods for studying the history, processes, and socio-cultural effects of media technologies on society. Following the critical cultural analyses by Benjamin and others, and the avant-garde and pop art movements, the study of mass media became popularized in academic discourses. Representative of the pop era, Marshall McLuhan established the study of mass media technologies as ecological entities, analyzing the broad-based cultural effects of the light bulb, radio, advertising, and television. His bold assertion, “the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action” (*Understanding Media* 9), was revolutionary at the time but has since been parlayed into the popular and academic vernacular.

Manovich’s cultural analytics and database aesthetics are technical means for examining technology’s effects on society—a position that like McLuhan has been criticized for being technologically deterministic. Other media scholars study the transformations of media
technologies as they occur over time, including Richard Grusin’s study of remediation and media archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst’s investigation of digital archives. While many of the earlier media scholars were contemptuous of mass media, believing the public was an inert, manipulated mass; contemporary media scholars view human interaction with media as proactive and dynamic. Although media scholars differ in their opinions regarding the effects and directional flow of media, their research is integral to studying collective memory and mass trauma.

Although certainly not the first to fuse artistic sensibility with the scholarly study of technology, McLuhan and illustrator Quentin achieved thus in their book, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Filled with visual puns, symbols, inventive fonts, and a daring layout, this book aptly represented McLuhan’s aphoristic style while simultaneously introducing concepts that would challenge future media scholars. One such challenge was locating a vantage point and method for critically examining the media that shaped all of modern society. His frequent references to the avant-garde artists, writers, and musicians depicted the importance of altering one’s perception of the world and suspending judgment. “Our time is for crossing boundaries, for erasing old categories—for probing around. When two seemingly disparate elements are imaginatively poised, put in apposition in new and unique ways, startling discoveries often result” (*The Medium is the Massage*).

33 See Adorno’s essay on “The Culture Industry” and Neil Postman’s book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. These works base their critique, in part, on the passivity of the consumer and the corporate control of the media.

McLuhan’s primary boundary crossing was his scholarly and aphoristic distillation of pop culture, which he developed from his environmental, spatial perspective. He believed media technologies, from alphabet to television, shaped human perspective and produced various social, economic, and political consequences distinguishing one era and place from another. McLuhan envisioned media as environments, explaining that their “ground rules, pervasive structure, and over-all patterns…elude easy perception” (*Medium is the Massage* 68). To perceive the environment, one needed to be positioned from within, as an artist/inventor/trickster. “Anti-environments, or counter-situations made by artists provide means of direct attention and enable us to see and understand more clearly” (68). Although biased towards Western society, McLuhan’s media “ecology” established a precedent for relating human perception to technology’s effects, including our concepts of space and time.

In *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich also urged his readers and students to trace the origins and similarities between computer and film technologies to the technical inventions of the early modern and avant-garde artists. Both McLuhan and Manovich used the inversion of the figure/ground concept—evident in the works of Picasso and Braque, and Wittgenstein’s duck/rabbit illustration— and used figure/ground as an unstable concept, subject to the individual’s perception or guided instruction. Unlike pictures or speech that hides the painterly technique or author’s subjective voice, artifacts that make visible its structure of becoming are bringing the ground up to the fore. Digital media, and databases in particular, make visible the structuring of various elements used to construct meaning. Manovich additionally created a genealogy of digital media, evolved from the technical processes of computation and film.
Manovich describes the web’s information structure, its collections of items, and the most common types of human-computer interaction (such as search, navigate, and more recently, comment) as evidence of database logic. Although he acknowledges that story structures exist in computer games, he explains that game narratives are generally weak and instead of relying on conventional narrative structures, players progress through the game via algorithms (222). Users of computer games, informational databases, or even hypertextual narratives are engaging new media, informed by databases. This is not to say that search and retrieval of specific items within a database results in a “narrative.” What Manovich does assert, is that by consciously selecting a particular trajectory of objects in order to reach a desired destination and knowing that other trajectories are possible, the structure as database is visible and the narrative is merely implied or imagined by the operator. Database logic infuses and directs much of our creative and cultural forms of expression and supports the non-dominant, non-hierarchical ethics of many archivists and curators.

Countering the critical stance against narrative logic as argued by Manovich and postmodern historians and archivists, are scholars defending narrative logic as a necessary cognitive framework for humans making sense of the world. Psychologist Jerome Bruner states, “…Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally…” and like human memory, does not mirror back empirical data but registers reality through “verisimilitude” (4). Constructing a narrative—stories, myths, excuses, etc.—is reconstructing a world of events, sequences, time and order. Bruner compares narrative to a mental map, “…a guide for using mind…” (15). He promotes a pragmatic view of narrative logic, considering the context and functions of the separate parts as well as the whole narrative.
Jerome McGann also offers a persuasive counter argument to the database/narrative binary. McGann describes the database as an interface to information and argues that rather than perceive database and narrative as dichotomous and opposing genres, database supports narrative and Manovich conflates interface with database. The interface is distinct from the database and enables narratives to assume different forms and present hierarchical or non-hierarchical forms of organization. McGann also avers that narrative is more than a privileged literary form that characterizes a particular cultural era. All creative work, with narratives among the many forms that imitate life, is multidimensional, “protean” and “shifting,” “open” and “complex” (“Database, Interface, and Archival Fever” 1589-90). To restrict the definition of database to that which opposes narrative is to diminish both forms of expression. Enriching our appreciation of narrative are the many dimensions offered through text tools, such as databases, with which cultural expressions. McGann argues that databases are tools for accessing elements or functions of the contents within.

Christiane Paul, however, contends that despite the primary function of the database to filter, relay, and visualize various types of information, the database can be turned back onto itself, revealing its “database aesthetics.” For example, real time searches produce data streams that may generate visualizations of user behaviors and also display patterns, suggesting certain cultural narratives operating behind the algorithms and visuals. As Paul explains, the “cultural subtexts—such as colonialization, the exoticizing of the ‘foreign’ and Other, and cultural stereotypes, for example—become a consistent visual meta-narrative” (106). Narrative operates, thus, at both micro and macro levels—as a cultural or meta-narrative—and thereby, it is important to review the narratives of disaster memorial archives at both levels. Thus, at both
micro and macro levels—as a cultural or meta-narrative. Thus, a component of my analysis of disaster archives includes examining the database structure and collection policies, and determining whether this genre is conducive for public mourning and recovery from a large scale disaster. I argue in Chapters 6 and 7, that the database aesthetics, (which encompasses the interface, archival policies, and functionality), may provide individual contributors space to work through mourning, but without also providing site visitors a means for constructing meaning, the archive is unlikely to assist the public in mourning.

Narratives of competing national identities and conflicting storytelling “rights,” frequently performed at monuments, memorials, and other lieux de mémoire, complicate mourning rituals. At issue is whether the display of vernacular shrines and the public opinions expressed in disaster archive narratives differ from official statements and broadcast media reports, and what this means for archiving and curating catastrophic events. I discovered from my examination of the oral histories and grief ephemera that filled the September 11 digital archives and repositories, the public expressed uncertainty towards the future and provided a range of suggestions and imagined outcomes for American society. Public opinion included pleas for peace and tolerance as well as cries for revenge. In contrast to the diversity and uncertainty of public opinion, the official responses to the 9/11 attacks and the nation's grief and anxiety included stalwart assurances that the safety and security of Americans was paramount, and the strengthened secrecy of government and military operations would be used for this purpose. The official rhetoric of the "war on terror" and "protecting our freedoms," supported a
Another issue complicating the analysis of the disaster archive is determining whether the presumed healing produced by sharing grief narratives may also be masking political issues that should have been exposed and questioned. For example, the political ties between some of Boston's Irish American affiliations and the activities of the Irish terrorist organization, the Provisional IRA, emerged as a topic of interest in a British newspaper, but this information was withheld from publication in *Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive* (Crilly “Interview”). The decision to censor this information from the published archives was, no doubt, politically motivated. The official media reports and statements by then mayor of Boston, Thomas Menino, proclaimed “We are one Boston,” and despite his illness that prevented frequent appearances or speeches, his office received letters of condolences from across the world. Nevertheless, the Boston Marathon Bombings triggered the nation's security infrastructures, which in turn caused disruption and interference with the city's own police force (Freedlander "Boston Mayor Tom Menino Sidelined"). The narratives of distrust and mockery of the FBI, evident in several of *Our Marathon’s* collections, countered the official statements that the FBI and anti-terrorist units would find and return the perpetrators to serve justice. The disaster archive narratives and their structures are thus considered illustrative of the impact that

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35 A CNN report from September 12, 2001, quotes President Bush from his speech to the public in which he assures them that with military intervention, punishment to the perpetrators and proof of American resolve will be “shown to the world” (CNN.com “Special Report”).
digitization and online networking has had in shaping social identity as well as collective memory.

Wolfgang Ernst, media “archaeologist” and successor to media scholar Friedrich Kittler, evokes McLuhan when he proposes a “cold” reading technique for understanding digital media as opposed to the “‘hot’ historical…imagination” (Ernst 70). However, he rejects McLuhan’s idea that media are “extensions of man” (Ernst 67). Rather, technologies evolve apart from human society and impose critical and cultural responses through their machinic operations. The classic archive functions of selection and deselection render it secretive and powerful. Digital archives, conversely, render their power through their accessibility and their translation of material content into signals and bits of information. This mechanized view of archival content is not opposed to socio-cultural studies, but complements the economic, social, and cultural discourses.

In contrast to the media-specific analyses of Manovich and Ernst, Henry Jenkins adopts a social constructionist perspective. He examines the socio-economic relations that develop where mass media technologies intersect with popular and political culture, using a more human-centered, ethnographic approach. Where Manovich’s database logic informs his theory of new media and predicts a predominant aesthetic, Henry Jenkins observes a participatory logic operating in society and shaping the future development of media technologies. “The term, participatory culture contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us
fully understands” (Jenkins 189-193). Jenkins suggests manipulation and reappropriation of digital media fosters participatory politics.

Henry Jenkins’ *Convergence Culture* is a response to technological determinism and the utopian visions of new media and enhanced democracy. Jenkins recognizes the media that fosters citizen activism and participation in economic and political decisions, is also owned and controlled by corporate and political interests. Yet, the multiple levels of agency and collaboration that Jenkins documents indicates a leveling of the consumer/producer hierarchy. Jenkins bases his theory of participatory culture on the “fans and other consumers who were invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content” (Jenkins 6904 Kindle). He generally eschews the term “prosumer,” coined by Alvin Toffler and used to describe the proliferation of self-help groups in the 1970s (Recuber). However, the agency of the consumer, or prosumer, is an easily transferable premise for engaging the public with national and community archives and merges well with Jenkins’ participatory culture. Timothy Recuber attributes the growth of online memorials and disaster archives to “prosumption.” Prosumers of the disaster archive are individuals who assume responsibility for collective healing. Their contributions of stories, images, messages, comments, and tags may not be truly participatory if these prosumers did not also participate in the selection, curation, and preservation policies (Theimer “Interview with author”). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, “Digital Archives of Disaster,” archivists and curators of digital memorials commonly provide minimal metadata and description for their collections, preferring to let the content “speak on its behalf.” One of the consequences of reduced context is the possibility of reading or viewing the content as current and potentially re-traumatizing an unprepared user. Another consequence is the absence of
interpretations and narratives that traditionally accompany an item or collection from its origins to its place in the archive. While this is not necessarily undesirable and may encourage users as myself to use various methods for recognizing patterns in the content, it does replace the narrative logic of history and provenance. Nevertheless, prosumers practice a participatory logic that negates any dominant, hierarchical ordering of content and results in the absence of a cohesive narrative, characteristic of database aesthetics.

Collective Memory: Contested History and Restorative Justice

“For it is precisely the function of public memory discourses to allow individuals to break out of traumatic repetitions. Human rights activism, truth commissions, and juridical proceedings are better methods for dealing with historical trauma. Another is the creation of objects, artworks, memorials, public spaces of commemoration ... Here the analysis of how memory and forgetting pervade real public space, the world of objects, and the urban world we live in, becomes crucial.”

Andreas Huyssen, Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory

As I write this dissertation, Dzhokar Tsarnaev has been sentenced to death for the Boston Marathon Bombing that left three people dead and hundreds wounded, and the U.S. federal court is preparing to indict Dylann Roof of hate crimes in the murders of nine people at the Emanuel A.M.E. church in Charleston, South Carolina. These two acts of domestic terrorism engage different political debates that register the rumblings of unresolved national issues and crises, but they also represent local communities united in mourning. The sites of these two crimes embodied each community’s respective heritage and core values, qualities that define citizen membership as well as provide resilience against outside threats. Boston’s pride in its American Revolution heritage is matched by its indefatigable love of the city’s sports. The Boston
Marathon, oldest continuously running marathon in the United States, represents one of the city’s renowned events and takes place on Boston’s civic holiday, “Patriot’s Day.” The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston represents the African American community’s stalwart against the South’s antebellum legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. The church’s history originates from the 1780s “Free African Society” religious movement and chronicles resistance to slavery and recovery from disasters. Both sites function as lieux de mémoire—sites of memory that work in the present by reinforcing shared values and enabling individuals to “remember,” or at least imagine the past.

However, terrorism was already integrated into the collective memories of Emanuel A.M.E. Church and the politics of resistance well established in the African American churches. The history of racial terrorism in the United States is not so much contested, as is the claim of present-day, pernicious racism. Rapidly evolving from public mourning to public protests against the iconic Confederate flag, this contested history reveals unrealized civil rights and unmet economic and political power.

Despite the long history of American racial terrorism, public memorials to victims of, or resistance to racial terrorism, have only recently emerged; the restoration of justice requires access to suppressed memories. Erika Doss explains these counter-monuments restore the history of forgotten, marginalized people that do not, in themselves, “reconcile or conciliate” the violence (363). Rather, counter-monuments provide spaces for critical memory work—arenas for confronting and discussing the grievous acts of the past. Whether the outpouring of Charleston’s white citizens’ presence and participation at the vernacular shrines at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church represents the work of mourning an ongoing racism that will eventually transform
policies of gun control, displays of the Confederate flag, and other systemic changes, is not yet known. What is known, is that among the messages displayed at the victims’ shrine, the question “Why?” challenges the world to take political action.

In contrast, the location of the Boston Marathon Bombing does not have a history of terrorism. Copley Square represents the city’s epicenter of 19th century art and architecture as well as the finish line for the Boston Marathon. Although the city’s identity is primarily tethered to the American Revolution and patriotism, Copley Square represents its emergence as a modern city, sophisticated and energetic. As with other heritage sites in Boston, Copley Square presents a united city, homogeneous and exuding “that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity,” characteristic of the modern nation-state (Anderson 36).

In the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombing, temporary shrines proliferated at Copley Square. The displays included numerous slogans evoking civic pride including, “Boston Strong,” “One Boston,” and “This is our F… City!” Although the spontaneous memorials included religious symbols, messages of peace, and assorted candles, flowers, teddy bears, and running shoes, they ignited patriotism and unity in defiance of the destruction of life and community. The contested histories of Boston, including race riots and connections to the Irish Republican Army, were not present in the public’s response to the marathon bombing. Whereas the Charleston church murders reopened the contested histories of racism, gun control, and alienation, the Boston Marathon Bombing did not elicit discussions of alienation and immigration or other links to terrorist activities that might threaten the civic unity. The public face of mourning that was etched in the vernacular shrines and disseminated through
social and broadcast media, focused on recovery through unification and reaffirmation of Boston as the symbolic center of American strength, resilience, and defiance. 

Comparisons to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were evident in Copley Square’s temporary shrines. Imagery of the burning twin towers, American flags, and anti-Muslim messages were left at the memorials and circulated through social media, effectively relating the loss of innocent lives to American innocence. The narrative of a strong and united Boston paralleled the U.S. patriotism expressed after 9/11, and the Western response to the terrorist-inspired murders at Charlie Hebdo. Like the spontaneous shrines and marches erected to publicly mourn the losses incurred from the 9/11 attacks, the Boston Marathon Bombing, and the Charlie Hebdo shootings, the memorials and public gatherings at Charleston’s Emanuel A.M.E. Church affirmed faith in both Christianity and the unity of the city. “One Charleston” echoes “One Boston” as bulwarks to external threats of terrorism. The threats to national security, implicit in all terrorist-inspired crimes, inspire strong narratives of unity.

How do memorials that illuminate contested histories and repressed or marginalized populations restore justice? When memorials function as counter-monuments—structures that present opposing, disruptive perspectives—they address past inequities and suppressed history. They are attempts to restore justice to the marginalized and forgotten and are, therefore, often contentious. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, counter-monuments and memorials appeared at sites where many of the represented atrocities occurred more than one hundred years ago. The more permanent architectures of such monuments as the “Spirit of Freedom” monument featuring the statue of Denmark Vesey, leader of the 1822 slave rebellion in Charleston, South Carolina, or the “Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial” honoring three
victims of lynching in Duluth, Minnesota, not only represent loss of life, but hope for a more just
world. The material presence of such monuments and memorials, in effect, command the public
to not forget—to remain emotionally open, empathic, and continue to engage in acts of
remembrance. The actions of walking around, photographing, and even vandalizing monuments
and memorials may lead to national dialogues, the first steps in restoring justice.

Although it is too soon to determine whether the public grief and mourning expressed in
Charleston will transform into “effective” mourning—actions that inspire restorative justice and
changes in the institutions and social relations that helped create the trauma—the vernacular,
sidewalk memorials reveal the struggle to find meaning amidst the unsettled history of the past.
They are temporary shrines, composed of fragile, impermanent materials that occupy the space
just long enough for most of the community to participate in the mourning and healing from the
tragedy. Both macabre and poignant, reminders of life and loss, these shrines are more social and
political than graveside memorials and monuments. They facilitate public mourning through
eclectic yet choreographed displays, but like counter-monuments also reflect the “processes of
democratization and struggles for human rights, to expanding and strengthening the public
spheres of civil society” (Huyssen 27). Monuments and memorials that commemorate lives lost
to violence or memories sequestered by political dominance may invite dissent, but they also
invite some degree of intimacy with the victims, arousing empathy and desire for justice.

Not all critics, however, agree that the heterogeneity and resistance politics of
contemporary monuments and memorials foster democratic and human rights. They believe the
didactic power of the monument, as it once served ancient civilizations, and as the unifying
symbol of nationhood that flowered during the 18th and 19th centuries, has since been displaced
by alternating representations of heroism and abject loss (Levine; Gopnik). Rather than inspire democratic values and unify a community or nation, the monuments of the 20th and early 21st centuries that symbolize loss are reminders of the state’s inability to allay anxiety and enable collective mourning. The reversal of monumentalizing greatness, in effect, casts doubt against the once unifying monuments of the past (Levine). Monuments are either celebrated or denigrated for their ability to spark debate and controversy, for their abstract and figurative qualities, or for their symbolic unity and diversity (Levine; Haskins). The ambiguous status of monuments and memorials is especially pronounced in contemporary society, “those who lack faith in fixed order and stable places” (Gopnik). Illuminating the ambiguity, or lack of an overarching and unifying narrative assumes monuments and memorials function as “texts.” Critically judging monuments and memorials by what they should or should not “say” or how they should function depends not only on present culture, but also on methods derived from earlier traditions of critical theory and semiotics traditions.

In sharp contrast to Levine’s claim that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a subversion of “genuine acts of remembrance and memorialization” (127), other critics including Marita Sturken and Erika Doss believe the VVM is a successful memorial in that it inspires debate. Cynicism regarding the integrity of the government and the fostering of pluralistic and often antagonistic interpretations interfere with the type of community bonding associated with public mourning. However, Marita Sturken and Adam Gopnik criticize the 9/11 National Memorial for its confusing and conflicting narratives. Sturken denounces the design of One World Trade Center and the large reflecting pools occupying the “hallowed ground” of Ground Zero. The two forms compete in corporate presence and absence; “its aesthetic of absence seems primarily to
evoke the absence of the towers” (“The aesthetics of absence,” 322). Gopnik also critiques the memorial’s failed symbolism and contradictory messages. He argues that the reflecting pools are too large and loud to effectively induce thoughtful remembrance and the museum exhibits do not provide enough curation and contextual information to inform or render meaning. Nevertheless, the very ambiguity and “absence” of meaning Gopnik, Levine, and others rue, may be necessary to inspire mourning and to provide space for the sacred. The open fields of the Gettysburg Memorial, the submerged memorial, U.S.S. Arizona, and the World Trade Center’s reflecting pools structure spaces large enough to accommodate multiple grief narratives, including those religious and politically contentious.

Prior to the Victorian era, the aesthetics and commemorative rituals associated with public monuments and memorials served to solidify the public’s understanding and healing (Levine; Choay). Monuments and memorials effectively symbolized a self-contained past that could be trusted as true, the dissension and marginalization of other memories dutifully forgotten (Levine). Should the aesthetic function of the memorial be based on how efficient or how discernible its design, structure, or layout relays history and truth? The question is fraught with ethical dilemmas including whose history and from whose perspective the memorial is constructed? And, should the memorial facilitate public mourning, renew social ties, and restore trust in the collective union?
Summary

The postmodern concepts of deconstruction, semiotic analysis, and the destabilization of authority through critical, cultural analysis inform my assessments of monuments, memorials, and archives. These concepts include interrogating popular culture and exposing stereotypes and exploitative practices delivered through mass media and entertainment. Contemporary cultural critics examining monuments, memorials, and archives have adapted the intellectual concepts of postmodern, poststructuralist theories. Postcolonial and feminist studies, film and media studies, and collective, activist archive studies draw much of their criticism against cultural stereotypes and commercial production from the postmodern, poststructuralist theories.

Cultural memory studies form the second leg of this dissertation’s theoretical foundation. In conjunction with the deconstruction of texts, cultural memory theorists debunked history as a progressive and objective phenomena. As greater understanding of human memory was gained through advances in neuroscience, and also from recording the witnesses to and survivors of mass twentieth century atrocities, cultural memory theorists questioned the objectivity of written, archival history. Together with deconstructing the symbology and political ideology accompanying public commemorations at culturally significant sites (*lieux de mémoire*), cultural memory studies fostered the examination of displaced and unrepresented populations. The realization that collective, cultural memories were intertwined with individual traumatic memories, repressed historical documentation, and the writing of history had a rippling effect on contemporary historians and archivists.

Media studies, encompassing mass media, visual culture, and digital media technologies, meld together and provide the third theoretical foundation of this dissertation. The history of
“new media” (digital forms of expression) demonstrated that some of the technical properties of older media forms, film and avant-garde art (e.g., montage) combined with the new processes of computation (e.g., automaticity and hyperlinking). The technical processes become entwined with cultural aesthetics—preferred modes of artistic and commercial expression. The convergence of commerce, communication, and entertainment (made possible through digital, broadcast, and entertainment industries) offer opportunities for developing alternative modes of consumption. Rather than functioning as a passive spectator, the consumer is encouraged to participate and become a prosumer.

The proliferation of social media technologies and their uses for communicating and chronicling both catastrophic and mundane events challenges media scholars and educators to consider the ethics as well as aesthetic properties of digital media. Ulmer and Mauer are among many scholars, activist archivists, and artists advocating self-reflective experimentation with digital media technologies. Their contributions to media studies include pedagogies for teaching digital literacy and ethics. By critically examining the hidden assumptions behind commonplace statements, mass media imagery, and one’s own motives and relationships to the subject portrayed, the digital product (electronic monument) is grounded in ethics. Examples of ethical questions posed during the initial planning or execution of a large-scale digital project, such as a memorial or disaster archive might include the following: “Whose story or memory are we representing and how should the story be told? What emotional effects or political implications are generated by our website? And, to what purpose are we presenting or representing a memorable, singular event?”
In Chapter 4, “Contemporary Trauma Culture,” I explore collective memory as it relates to trauma. Our society has become increasingly familiar with domestic and global acts of terrorism, augmenting our collective memories through continuous exposure to traumatic events through mass media. The study of posttraumatic stress and dissociated memories resulting from exposure to and survival from such events increases our understanding of regional and cultural responses to trauma. From extensive psychological and cross-cultural studies of traumatized communities, we see evidence of posttraumatic growth as well as distress symptoms. We also observe that communities with strong infrastructures of social support systems recover from disasters more quickly. Yet, our public and private expressions of grief and mourning in the aftermath of a globalized, traumatic event often become politicized. Support systems that respond to individual and collective trauma become an integral part of the public display of grief and mourning. Moreover, support systems, including first responders and cultural heritage organizations, create an impression of homogeneity and solidarity, even if the community remains traumatized or continues to feel vulnerable.
CHAPTER 4: CONTEMPORARY TRAUMA CULTURE

"Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed."

Toni Morrison, Beloved,

For many Americans whose participation in civic life has long been marginalized, or who have previously experienced violent, massive trauma, the attacks of 9/11 were neither shocking nor as disruptive and time stopping as recounted in the majority of witness and survivor stories in “The September 11 Documentary Project,” The September 11 Digital Archive, and The National 9/11 Memorial Museum. Al Larry’s experience of 9/11 offers an alternative narrative to that of our nation struck dumb by this unfathomable act of terrorism.

On September 11, 2001, I worked with Al Larry, assistant principal of Eustis High School and primary administrator of the 9th grade center’s Curtright Campus. That morning, Al beckoned me into his office where he and his secretary, Angela Jones, were discussing the shocking scene of a plane that had flown into the North Tower. While we were pondering the reasons why a plane would fly into the building and listening to the live broadcast, we watched the second plane fly into the South Tower. Angela and I gasped. We immediately knew this was not accidental and after standing in shock and numbly watching the news for a few minutes, I immediately rushed to the classrooms and encouraged teachers to turn on their TVs.

Later that day after the students were dismissed Al spoke to a small group of teachers informally gathered on a sidewalk in the center of the school. Al prefaced his statement with an
apology that what he was about to say was not meant to upset us or diminish the horror of the attacks. He explained that the public’s surprise, shock, and dismay in response to the attacks were similar to “being Black in the U.S.” Al’s memories of terrorism inspired by racism transferred across generations as well as those suffered in his childhood. He grew up in a county shadowed by the notorious Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall’s connections with the KKK and the controversial case of the Groveland Four.\(^{36}\) I understood that his perception of 9/11 was filtered through a history of racial terrorism that set him apart from White America, despite the unifying effect 9/11 had on U.S. citizens.

Al’s experiences of racism had prepared him for a worldview of unexpected terror and inexplicable hatred. His knowledge of “white supremacy” and his fear of unprovoked racial attacks derive from personal experiences, but he also carries transgenerational trauma from the shared memories of his family and community. 9/11’s traumatic effect on the country enabled Al to share memories of a racial past, a topic still largely taboo in conservative Lake County. Nor were Al’s opinions unique. In response to the 9/11 attacks, many African Americans were divided between renewed patriotism for the United States and remembering the history of slavery, Jim Crow, and other atrocities against non-whites in America (Goldstone).

Forgetting acts of violence perpetrated by the United States and targeting the enemy are collective manifestations of denial and anger. Psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor Dori Laub

\(^{36}\) The “Groveland Four” refers to the controversial case against four young African American grove workers accused of raping a white woman in Groveland, Florida, 1949. The Ku Klux Klan, notorious Lake County Sheriff, Willis McCall, and the NAACP with Thurgood Marshall converge in this case that would help catapult the Civil Rights movement. For an excellent account of this event and trial, see Gilbert King’s *Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America.*
described the post-9/11 public sentiment of flag-waving patriotism and the desire to seek justice and revenge as valid, yet counterproductive strategies for fully “absorbing and recognizing” the traumatic event (“September 11, 2001 – An Event”). As African American history scholars Dwanna Goldstone and Lanita Jacobs-Huey observed in the public responses to 9/11, pernicious and insidious cultural racism was evident in the demonization of Muslims (Goldstone, Jacobs-Huey). The blindness to ongoing racism, from which many Americans suffer, extended to the Arab or Muslim populations in general.

In the previous chapters, I addressed this form of cultural amnesia from the perspective of collective memory and the political contests emerging from public mourning and memorials. I now address trauma as a psychic phenomenon that interferes with the ability to remember, witness, and relate the trauma to others without guided therapy. I interchange the terms, trauma and PTSD to describe a personal experience of, or witness to imminent threats of death, harm, and other types of injury that overwhelms the individual’s perception of reality (Berger 9). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) distinguishes PTSD from depression and anxiety disorders by the extent and nature of the exposure, as well as by such chronic and disabling effects as flashbacks, fearfulness, and avoidance of objectively non-threatening places. An intensification of PTSD, complex trauma, results from prolonged exposure to inescapable or multiple traumatic events, such as habitual sexual abuse or living amid daily war or terror (Mørkved, et. al.).

One of the paradoxes in the study, recovery from, and cultural expression of trauma is its speechlessness, the near impossibility to piece together a coherent narrative or retelling of trauma. This inability to speak of trauma may be understood as pathological, as occurs with
PTSD, or proof of the inadequacy of verbal language to translate a traumatic experience. Silence may also be culturally determined as exemplified by non-narrative means of expressing traumatic memories, including poetry, music, or dance. Moreover, the contexts in which narrative constructions are created (clinical therapy or courtroom testimony, for example), produce different outcomes, such as individual catharsis or attaining justice. Whether the narrative is focused primarily on the traumatic incident, one’s entire life experience, or the political implications and potential evidence for restoring justice, the context helps determine the effectiveness of narrative therapy (Horne, Mansdorf).

Nevertheless, despite evidence of preference for non-narrative expressions of trauma in some cultures, there is general consensus among the Western medical establishment, that narrative based therapies are successful in non-Western societies (Mørkved, et. al., Wimberly, Welton-Mitchell, et.al.). Recent clinical studies of trauma in widespread regions of the world evidence the reduction of PTSD symptoms by retelling or constructing life narratives. Exposure therapy (ET), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), narrative exposure therapy (NET), and eye-movement, desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) each employ narrative constructions in their patients to varying degrees. For example, victims of massive, ongoing terror as experienced by Bosnian residents, respond better to relating life histories than limiting their narratives to

\[\text{Ananya Kabir examines a variety of genres used for expressing traumatic events in Southeastern Asian and African cultures, including poetry, song, and dance. The tropes that emerge from each genre, setting, and traumatic event not only illuminate aesthetic representations of grief or terror, but may also provide tools for processing the trauma, culturally specific and not limited to narrative constructions (“Affect, Body, Place”). Felicity Horne also questions the relationship between coherently narrating a traumatic event and experiencing catharsis. She studied the oral testimonies of family members whose loved ones were victims of the South African apartheid violence and observed that despite the articulate testimonies, the narrators continued to suffer from symptoms of PTSD and an inability to attain closure (“Can Personal Narratives Heal Trauma?”).}\]
describing the traumatic incident. In this context, the life history afforded a reconstruction of self, identity, and social ties with community that had heretofore been destroyed and repressed by ethnic cleansing (Audergon, Mørkved, et. al.).

Depending on the origins of the trauma certain therapies are more successful than others despite similarities in symptoms and diagnoses of PTSD (Haagen, et.al, Mørkved, et. al). For example, veteran soldiers of war suffering from PTSD respond better to ET than do refugees of war, for whom life stories and testimonies have proven more successful interventions (Haagen, et.al.). In sum, cultural factors as well as the type of trauma experienced are complicated, and both clinical psychologists and sociologists caution against adopting intervention methods and treatments without assessing the cultural context and specific traumatic event.

I begin the chapter with definitions and origins of trauma studies, tracing the roots of Western society’s diagnoses and treatments of trauma. I include this history to illuminate pre-scientific means for understanding psychic trauma and associated beliefs and rituals used to eradicate the individual of his trauma. Cultural rituals, such as the requisite cleansing of battle-weary soldiers before returning to civilian life in 5th Century Athens, and the epic poems and lamentations depicting traumatic events, like the great flood in Ancient Babylon are performances and modes of forgetting trauma on the one hand, and structuring collective memory of traumatic events on the other. This is not to say that trauma, as depicted by the ancient world in battle rituals, public mourning, and poetry is equivalent to current clinical diagnoses of PTSD. Howbeit, examination of trauma’s history as collective tragedy or individual affliction reveals an overall, destabilizing effect on society (Ben-Ezra, Shay).
In the second section, I introduce selected clinical and sociological case studies of trauma that result from widespread catastrophic events. These studies illuminate some of the cultural biases implicated in diagnosing and treating PTSD. I address the difficulties in witnessing and mourning the losses from a globalized traumatic event in the chapter’s last two sections. One of the key challenges facing our highly networked, global economy is minimizing, if not eradicating, the effects of exposure to acts of war, violence, and disaster whether face-to-face or through media. Another challenge is acknowledging our society’s complicity in producing conditions that provoke traumatic events. The role of distanced spectator and witness to tragedy cannot be considered a neutral position given the connection between high-tech lifestyles and globalized traumas. As our understanding of the complexity of trauma increases, we see that our psychological interventions for treating PTSD require adjustment to accommodate specific, cultural contexts as well as individual, pathological histories. What remains to be addressed is whether our representations of trauma (as indicated in disaster archives and memorials) defer resolution and perpetuate conditions for retraumatization. That is, a socio-psychological understanding of trauma may inform ethical models for witnessing and representing traumatic events.

*Defining and Historicizing Trauma Studies*

The Greek word *trauma* may have originally referred to only physical wounds, but the conditions of psychic trauma were well known to the ancient world, as evidenced in the writings of Hippocrates and described in the lamentations of ancient Babylonia and Old Testament biblical stories (Kring, et. al.; Ben-Ezra; Meineck). Psychic trauma as a modern medical term refers to the wound caused by “emotional shock,” manifested by repressed or disassociated
memories ("Trauma"). The psychological study of trauma originated with the case studies and research conducted by Drs. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud in Vienna, and Dr. Jean Martin Charcot in Paris from the late 1800s through the 1920s (Kring, et.al.). Their respective studies of hysteria and traumatic neuroses helped establish the precedent for diagnosing and treating mental illness as medical and psychological afflictions.  

The diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Vietnam War veterans in the early 1980s is considered by many scholars to mark the beginning of trauma studies (Caruth 3; Ringel 4; Kring et.al. 126). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) added PTSD to its registry of mental illnesses in 1980 and was amended to include complex and developmental stages of PTSD (Ringel 5). Current research in neuroscience and cognitive-behavior studies supports the ongoing study and treatment of PTSD and other acute anxiety disorders. The proliferation of sub-classes in the DSM detail symptoms of PTSD but do not address causes, leading some to question the DSM’s reliability (Kring, et. al.). On the other hand, clinical studies of exposure to sustained or multiple types of trauma, as experienced by survivors of torture, genocide, or repeated rape, evidence the different levels of severity in PTSD and frequently warrant different types of therapies (Haagen, et.al, Mørkved, et. al).

38 Breuer treated female patients afflicted with hysteria and with his young protégé, Freud, refined the theory and treatment of psychic disturbance and dissociation caused by trauma. Although Breuer and Freud jointly published their research in Studies on Hysteria, 1895, Freud would soon replace his focus on dissociative, traumatic memories with investigations of the unconscious (Ringel and Brandell 2012). Charcot and his protégé, Pierre Janet, researched “traumatic hysteria,” associating hysteria’s symptoms with a neurophysical shock (Roth 5). Janet continued the study of traumatic memory and observed from his case study of “Irena,” that a purely psychic phenomenon, such as the fear of remembering traumatic memories, could produce erratic behavior and amnesia (van der Kolk and van der Hart 176).
Why do some individuals and communities develop PTSD in the aftermath of a catastrophic event while others in similar circumstances do not? To answer this question, multiple disciplines including psychology, sociology, ethnography, and culture studies apply their respective methods of study. Our commonplace knowledge of mental trauma is informed by our cultural heritage of myth, literature, film, and communications media as well as trauma’s history of medical (scientific) research. Admittedly, the distinctions between cultural analysis and scientific methods for researching and building knowledge of trauma are not absolute. Psychology has informed literary and media studies for much of the twentieth century, particularly in the semiotics and film criticism of Kaja Silverman and Laura Mulvey. Their respective works address the formation of subjective identity as mirrored by cinematic “signifiers.” The projection of self and other as viewed through relationships on screen are essentially discourses—models for interpreting visual culture, as well as relating oneself to one’s culture (Silverman, “Subject”; Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”). Psychological and cognitive research in trauma also supports the use of narrative construction and storytelling by ethnographers and oral historians. Conversely, literary works and historical narratives enhance the clinical research and treatments of PTSD (Ben-Ezra; Shay). Nevertheless, this brief

39 See Carl Lindahl’s ethnographic research and oral history projects, which are founded in psychology and talk therapy. Yet, his work with survivors of catastrophic events (Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti Earthquake), transcends therapy and introduces career skills and profit earnings into the communities through education and sponsorship. Rather than impose a therapist/patient or subject/other dichotomy into the projects, Lindahl facilitates local community resource building and resilience in his approach to therapeutic storytelling.

40 One example of literature informing clinical psychology has been articulated by Dr. Jonathan Shay’s work with military veterans and the readings of Homer’s epic, Ulysses.
and highly selective review will demarcate the more scientific from the more cultural types of trauma studies that altogether address the implications of widespread traumatic events.

Contemporary researchers in psychology and posttraumatic stress disorder have discovered evidence that ancient civilizations were aware of mental health disorders, particularly those associated with wars and widespread natural disasters. As mentioned in Chapter 1 regarding ancient archives, documents including the lamentations discovered in King Ashurbanipal’s ancient library, describe the emotional despair attributed to a catastrophic event. Yet the prolonged grieving that resulted in melancholy and the disruptive behaviors caused by traumatic experience were not necessarily associated with the stressful event.

Ancient cultures commonly believed supernatural forces caused human behavior that was unnatural. The ancient societies of China, Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Judah recorded accounts of people possessed by demons or bad spirits, requiring exorcism. By the fifth century BC, Hippocrates rejected the supernatural explanation of mental illnesses and believed the source was an affliction of the brain. He understood the human body’s four “humors,” (blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm) required a delicate balance that when upset would result in certain conditions, including: mania, melancholia, and phrenitis (brain fever). Hippocrates made prescriptions from his deductions, which were recorded and adopted over the next several centuries in Greece and Rome. Although many of his observations were unfounded, his premise that human behaviors may be caused by structural and internal imbalances is surprisingly similar to contemporary ideas about depression (Kring, et. al. 9).
In ancient Athens, the public commemoration of death, particularly during the Peloponnesian wars, included purification rites for returning soldiers. Without performing these rites, the soldiers were unable to shed their traumatic memories of war or their war-like behaviors. By the end of the Greek and Roman Empires, church officials (monks) replaced the physicians as healers of the sick. Belief in the possession by demons returned during the Middle Ages and prayer and exorcism were common treatments for mental illnesses (10). Returning soldiers in the medieval world had to perform penance in the Catholic Church. This cultural rite of purification was reminiscent of 5th century Athenian tragic theater, performed by and for combat veterans (Shay 142). Both examples provided the catharsis Aristotle identified in Greek tragedies.

Although contemporary theories and treatments of trauma are based in scientific discovery and method, some psychologists and historians identify symptoms of PTSD in the literature and records of the ancient world. Shay guides his patients through the tales of Ulysses to help treat their symptoms of PTSD. He explains that the ancient Greeks had knowledge of combat stress and trauma and the Odysseus epic illustrates several PTSD characteristics, such as survivor guilt, bitter anger, and depression. However, he does not believe all of Ulysses’ psychotic behaviors can be attributed to PTSD and acknowledges that his unregenerate anger precedes his battle years. Shay explains, “the most violent and intractable cases of combat trauma...have frequently experienced rapes or other severe abuse and neglect in childhood and/or adolescence prior to military service” (142).

Ben-Ezra also believes the lamentations, literature, and historical accounts beginning with the Sumerians and Babylonians and continuing through medieval and Renaissance Europe
reveal extensive knowledge of psychological trauma. He conducted close readings of “historical, religious and literary texts,” in which he located disasters and identified events and terms used by the DSM to describe acute and posttraumatic stress symptoms (224). Of the more significant findings from the literature were sleep disturbances. Ben-Ezra admits the inherent biases and varied cultural contexts embedded in ancient and pre-modern literature may disqualify the assumption that sleep disturbances and other symptoms of psychological trauma are universal. Nevertheless, he asserts our medical knowledge of PTSD and other acute stress disorders could be augmented by continued comparisons between ancient texts and contemporary trauma research.

Following the Greco-Roman era and prior to the 15th century, Europeans believed “lunacy” and “madness” were moral failings and subjects of Church jurisdiction. Hospitals were used to house lepers, but by the 17th century Europe was establishing hospitals for the mentally ill (Kring, et. al.). Foucault describes the establishment of these asylums as the period of the “great confinement,” in which hospitals and asylums housed both the unemployed and the insane. The asylums served as “semi-judicial” entities rather than as medical hospitals (“The Great Confinement” 128). The moral jurisdiction of the asylum was based in part on the belief that idleness and insanity were moral failures, thereby justifying the hard labor and harsh treatment of the inmates. Although reforms of the asylums were initiated in the 18th century, “madness” threatened the social unity and secular morality of the state (Kring, et. al. 12,

41 These texts included the well-known epics of Gilgamesh, the Iliad and the Odyssey, and Beowulf, histories and treatises by Herodotus, Xenophon, Epicurus, Lucretius, and Pliny, literary works by Ovid and Shakespeare, and accounts of the Black Death (225-236).
Foucault “Birth of the Asylum”). Hence, treatments for mental illness focused on improving the morals and self-discipline of the patient.

The scientific concept of psychic trauma developed during the 1880s through the medical research and treatment of hysteria in hospitalized patients. Dr. Josef Breuer of Vienna and Dr. Jean Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris studied and treated patients afflicted with anxiety and suffering from traumatized memories. They each mentored Freud during his early studies of mentally ill, institutionalized patients. Freud was initially influenced by Charcot’s belief that traumatic experiences would produce unresolved memories and hysterical symptoms, but he would later attribute psychological trauma to precocious sexual relations (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 166; Ringel 2). With Breuer, Freud would establish a closer working relationship and replace the popular treatment, hypnosis, with the “talking cure” invention. Charcot and his former student, Pierre Janet, continued their study of trauma and formed theories of traumatic memory dissociation, believing a traumatic event would produce dissociation from the event and result in the repression of the memory (van der Kolk and van der Hart 158). Although both Janet and Freud agreed that the repetitive acting-out of traumatic memories indicated the inability to integrate experiences, Freud would not return to his study of trauma neurosis until late in his life when he wrote Moses and Monotheism, 1939 (van der Kolk and van der Hart 167). His certainty that traumatic memories originated from explicit, repressed

42 Although the scientific investigation of mental illness would not begin until the late 19th century, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) believed hysteria was biological in origin and experimented with metals and hypnotism in his quest for a cause and a cure (Kring, et. al. 16).

43 Freud and Breuer advised patients to freely associate and verbalize thoughts as they occur, after which the attending physician would interpret and report back to the patients the meanings of their expressions. This “talk therapy” developed into psychotherapy (Kring, et.al. 17; Forrester 338).
events would prove to be less valuable for trauma studies than from his observations of melancholia and the latency of neurosis (Caruth 8; van der Kolk and van der Hart 166).

The convergence of scientific discovery, industrial invention, and governmental patronage in the late 19th and early 20th century were catalysts for medical research and converting asylums into mental health hospitals (Kring, et. al. 11-12). Scientific studies and methods of treatment for emotional trauma in the 20th century increasingly focused on psychiatric care. Although psychotherapy was not universally accepted as treatment for all psychic disorders, psychic trauma was primarily understood to be an aberration of the personality and the methods used for diagnosing and treating mental illness applied to individuals. As a corollary to psychology and psychiatry, social work and family counseling also emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, seeking causal relationships between economics, society, and various physiological and psychological illnesses.⁴⁴

Medical interest in the shell shock of WWI soldiers continued to focus on the dissociative and traumatic memories that remained in the unconscious, but were manifested through nightmares, flashbacks, and assorted somatic responses (such as tics and shaking). During the Second World War, the terms shell shock and war neurosis were replaced with battle fatigue and combat exhaustion. British historian Ben Shephard and American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay each refer to the treatment of shell-shocked WWI soldiers in their critiques of psychiatric

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⁴⁴ Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell’s institute for indigent women and children in the 1850s and Jane Addams’ Hull House of 1889 helped introduce medical and scientific research into the cause and treatment of social problems in the United States. Education and training in social work still includes psychotherapy and is considered a mental health profession under the aegis of medical science (Kring, et. al.)
treatment, yet for different reasons. Shephard equates the over-used psychiatric diagnosis of war neuroses during WWI with exacerbating the soldier’s trauma, and credits the stiff upper lip attitude of the British during WWII with fewer documented cases of battle neuroses (17). Shay, conversely, believes the medical community failed the traumatized WWI soldiers by labeling them with the vague and useless term “shell shock” (154-155). The emphasis by the doctors on the unique personality of the afflicted and the treatments of isolation and experimental shock therapy overlooked two crucial symptoms of war neurosis: the loss of faith in society and the loss of faith in oneself.

What seemed obvious to Shay but ignored by the medical community, was the integral component of society and its role in minimizing or maximizing PTSD (211). Despite Shay’s claim to the contrary, there are many studies correlating the existence of strong social infrastructures with recovery from PTSD including McFarlane, Cowell, and Williams’ survey of multiple disasters and evidence of coordinated, systematic collaboration between mental health workers, social service agencies, outreach, and the training of non-mental health workers to respond to crises. In fact, studies of individual resilience to PTSD identify multiple personality factors, including the ability to adapt well to losses (Bonnano), and social factors, including strong social ties (Charuvastra and Cloitre), and beliefs and rituals for coping (Mansdorf). Longitudinal studies of communities exposed to massive, catastrophic events and studies of particular events, such as 9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing, generally correlate individual and collective resilience to the social infrastructure, including well-prepared first responders and public mental health education (Galea, et. al.; Silver, et. al.; Holman, Garfin, and Cohen). The absence of social support corresponds to an inverse relationship, increasing cases and levels of
PTSD (Charuvastra and Cloitre). Longitudinal case studies and reviews of clinical research that support this finding help ground social and cultural studies of trauma, reiterating the idea that trauma is best understood as a psychosocial and cultural phenomenon.

Clinical and Ethno-Cultural Studies of Trauma

Investigating the social and ethno-cultural factors that inform our understanding of trauma draws theoretical strength from interdisciplinary fields and models, including social constructionism, media studies, and ethnography. I define clinical studies of trauma as controlled examinations of individuals or populations for the purposes of testing diagnoses and treatments of PTSD and other psychological sequelae stemming from a traumatic event. Ethno-cultural studies of trauma focus primarily on the individual’s affected belief systems and the overall social infrastructures and rituals used for coping with trauma’s after-effects. Both types of disciplinary frameworks complement the ongoing investigation of globalized trauma and terror and both reveal social constructivist theory. Social constructionism as a theoretical model defines PTSD as the disruption of social networks and the inability to assign meaning to a catastrophic event or experience. Social constructivists rely on both clinical and culturally based research, connecting exposure to mass media images and film with individual responses and reconstructions of traumatic events (McFarlane, et. al.; Neimeyer, Reisner; DiNitto). Clinical studies of media effects on trauma tend to support the correlation between intense and repeated exposure to the event through media on the one hand, and the presence of PTSD symptoms on the other. Mass media, by virtue of its ubiquitous presence and emotional effects, tends to turn local disasters into global events. Continued exposure to media has been shown to result in stress symptoms similar to people who directly witnessed or were in close proximity to the disaster.
(Silver, et. al.; Vasterman, et. al.). These studies drew their conclusions from a variety of clinical studies including the effects of mass psychogenic illness and the media (McFarlane, Cowell, and Williams), the three year longitudinal surveys of Americans witnessing the 9/11 attacks and the Iraq War through mass media (Silver, et.al.), the laboratory study of adolescents in Boston, measuring their autonomic and emotional responses to the media coverage of the Boston Marathon bombing (Busso, et. al.) and Internet surveys of residents in Boston, New York, and selected cities following the Boston Marathon bombings (Holman, Garfin, and Silver).

Notwithstanding cultural differences for detecting and treating symptoms of PTSD, much of the research in global disasters conducted by the medical and sociology professions provides evidence that entire populations can become traumatized. Clinical studies of trauma in social contexts integrate theory and methodology from such fields as epidemiology, social neuroscience and sociology, psychology, and cognitive science. Generally speaking, these studies focus on the psychological sequelae (pathological disorders and diseases) that develop from traumatic experiences. In their reviews of clinical research of combat veterans, child abuse victims, and survivors of the 9/11 WTC attacks, Drs. Charuvastra and Cloitre affirm that “human social experience has a particularly salient if not central role in the way an individual responds to trauma, beginning with the first social bond, the parent-child relationship, and extending to experiences in adulthood at both the dyadic and community or group level” (Charuvastra and

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45 Common knowledge suggests psychologists do not typically recognize trauma to be culturally constructed. However, Anthony J. Marsella discusses ethnocultural aspects of PTSD, explaining that despite humans sharing certain neurological and physical responses to trauma (such as the release of adrenal hormones), the perception of trauma, including visceral and emotional reactions, are encoded by one’s culture (Marsella “Ethnocultural Aspects of PTSD”).

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Prior exposure to traumatic incidents and proximity to the traumatic event, when combined, produce high risk or probably development of PTSD. Popular methods of treatment correspond to the clinical diagnoses of PTSD. Exposure therapy and combinations of exposure and desensitization procedures with cognitive behavioral therapy are recommended for individuals suffering varying degrees of PTSD (Brewin and Holmes). “Prolonged exposure” (PT) is considered by many therapists to be the “gold standard” for treating PTSD, which is distinguished by its combined methods to retrain thoughts, and replace fear and avoidance through “in vivo (situational) and imaginal (recounting a traumatic memory) exposures” (Morkev, et. al 455). Another treatment similarly based on theories of memory and cognition (where senses, emotions, and comprehension work together to bring clarity) is EMDR. EMDR has been touted as successful for a wide variety of cases and symptoms of PTSD, and while research supports exposure treatments as being more beneficial, (Kring, et.al. 146), Haagen, et.al.), EMDR, like other exposure therapies, integrates traumatic memory into cognitive awareness and adaptive behaviors.

Clinical studies of PTSD in disaster affected communities are too many to cite in this chapter, but it is significant to note those that do not distinguish natural from man-made causes are still useful for understanding widespread, collectively experienced trauma. Examples include: longitudinal studies in Puerto Rico conducted by Bravo, et.al, and Charuvastra’s and Cloitre’s review of PTSD associated with natural and man-made disasters. However, cross-cultural, clinical research in community-wide PTSD, including comparisons between the 9/11 attacks, Madrid bombings, and Boston Marathon bombings are more persuasive for establishing common assumptions regarding exposure and resilience (Galea, et. al.; Miguel-Tobal; et. al., McFarlane and Williams; Miller, et. al.).

“Eye Movement and Desensitization and Reprocessing” (EMDR) is a desensitization technique using rapid eye movement and other sensory inputs to reduce anxiety associated with traumatic memories. Although inadequate as a stand-alone treatment, its supporters believe the technique augments and accelerates the benefits of psychotherapy. Exposure treatment refers to graduated exposure to the external stimuli that trigger PTSD symptoms. Vicarious exposure through virtual reality has met success with combat veterans (Kring, et.al.).
Additionally, contemporary sociological and ethnographic research conducted at sites of disaster, including the U.S. and Canada, Africa, Haiti, and India, have exposed the cultural gaps between knowledge of the traumatic event and methods of treatment (Erikson; McFarlane, Cowell, and Williams). Sociologist Kai Erikson identifies an intimacy and kinship that forms in communities of similarly afflicted individuals. The tragedy that isolates the community from the outside world also provides a “cushion for pain” (188). Erikson makes only slight distinctions between the traumas caused by natural or “technical” (man-made) disasters, although he admits that technological disasters are accompanied by blame and outrage as opposed to feelings of resignation associated with natural disasters. Using clinical and common definitions of trauma, he observes from his visitations to various disaster sites that the surviving community’s social resources are more significant for facilitating recovery than discovering the origins of the trauma (“Notes on Trauma and Community”).

Carl Lindahl likewise suggests the attempt to ascertain veracity and documentation of the exact location or nature of the trauma by people outside the afflicted community overlook the role that such storytelling may have for collective healing (“Legends of Hurricane Katrina”). McFarlane, Cowell, and Williams also report local community structures and relations provide the best context and often best methods of therapy for disaster recovery. “One of the major reasons for deaths in disaster is the failure of technology to control the natural environment. In the modern world, we see nature as being a containable and controllable dimension of our existence” (McFarlane, Cowell, and Williams 2). The authors observe that when local social support systems are lacking, as well as when engineering science or government fails to protect or prevent the disaster, communities are at greater risk for traumatization. As part of McFarlane,
Cowell, and Williams’ recommended disaster response plans, they also suggest coordinated efforts be made to integrate and train mental health workers, governing agencies, and local social support systems.

Yet, assumptions of disaster-induced PTSD are not universally accepted. Many studies reveal posttraumatic growth frequently develops out of traumatic experiences (Bonanno; Berger; and Neimeyer). Posttraumatic growth encompasses positive outcomes, including increased appreciation for life, spiritual awakening, and emotional insights that result from surviving and reflecting upon one’s traumatic experience. In my analysis of disaster archive narratives, I interpreted such positive, self-reflective statements as indicators of posttraumatic growth, (although these statements could also reveal PTSD was never actually experienced and the narrator was inherently resilient). Clinical psychology professor George Bonanno distinguishes “resilience” from “recovery” and observes that resilient people quickly and smoothly resume a normal “trajectory” of life from trauma, grief, and mourning. He suggests an inverse of the factors that contribute to PTSD, including lack of social support, low levels of education, and dissociative memory, might predict resilience (Bonanno 107). Significantly, resilience enables trauma survivors to generate positive outcomes, such as gaining greater self-reliance, spirituality, and renewed appreciation of life—outcomes more evident in some cultures and sub-populations than others (Berger). As psychological studies of trauma and grief in Sri Lanka, (Jayatunge), and disaster recovery work in Haiti and Texas by anthropologist Carl Lindahl indicate, local traditions, particularly those non-Western in origin, endow survivors with resilience and recovery treatments (Kabir, Lindahl). In general, these studies demonstrate the importance of local customs and family/community networks for defining and treating the disaster’s outcomes.
By adjusting the frame of “us/other” and acknowledging the biases and limitations of Western trauma studies, ethnographers and mental health workers seek to reinforce the sovereignty and long-term resilience of the survivors through collaboration with the indigenous cultures. It must be noted, however, that the dichotomy, “us/other,” was used by Lindahl to assess the mass media representations of the residents of New Orleans, obviously Western in culture. “Otherness” indicates dominant, largely White attitudes towards minority races and poverty that is overcome by assuming narrative and financial control over the telling and representation of one’s story (Jasper and Lindahl, “Houston Survivor Project” 1504).

Clinical and psychoanalytic studies of trauma have also contributed to literary and cultural criticism. Critics and supporters alike credit Cathy Caruth for illuminating the nature of trauma through her interpretation and applications of psychology and psychoanalysis to works of contemporary film and literature. In her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Caruth describes trauma’s intractable nature: its inaccessibility to language, its deferred meaning, and the necessity to provide witnesses (both as narrators and listeners) in order to recall and make sense of the trauma (156). Caruth and her contributing authors address the pathology of trauma, informed by Freudian psychoanalysis and Holocaust survival stories. She draws insights from Freud’s and younger colleague Pierre Janet’s work with patients diagnosed with hysteria (forerunner of PTSD) in which the traumatic event can never be fully remembered since its unassimilated sensations and stored images cannot be assembled into a narrative. Caruth believes that representing trauma through literary form should reflect a resistance to the narrative construction of truth. She suggests that rather than ascertaining the trauma through the “pathology of individual suffering,” contemporary society perceives trauma through narrative
that convey disruption and multiple, inassimilable forms—i.e., postmodernist constructions (156). In other words, trauma is not perceived as it happens, but in the belated effects: the persistent flashbacks and fragmented memories that illuminate a moment of interrupted time and incoherence. Contemporary film and literature that resists closure or poses multiple narratives of traumatic events are illuminating the aporia that besets modern society: the inability to fully comprehend and thus narrate ongoing acts of terror and trauma.

Archives and trauma are inextricably connected in Cathy Caruth’s analysis of Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever*. She argues for a psychoanalytic understanding of history as related in the archive—the place and process of continually searching for the origin, and the discovery and re-interpretation of evidence. Caruth cites Derrida’s comparison of archiving to Freud’s “death drive” and the subsequent annihilation of memory that results from recording only history or memories that can be articulated and represented (*Literature in the Ashes of History* 75). The death drive, as interpreted and defined by both Caruth and Derrida, refers to the compulsive remembering and returning to disturbing or threatening events, recalled in their immediacy and without resolution. These fragments of memory, not yet written or inscribed in a language that would afford meaning, will not be fully comprehended until the end of one’s life, or in the context of the archive, until future societies can make sense of its contents (Derrida 12; Caruth 79).

Recent developments in trauma studies, however, implicate political interests and cultural attitudes for fostering and abetting diagnoses of mental trauma within Western society (Reisner; Radstone; and Vermeulen). Steven Reisner challenges the evidence supporting Freud’s traumatic neuroses theory and posits trauma is a cultural invention, susceptible to narcissism. Susanna
Radstone believes analyzing trauma on a cultural level is subject to becoming voyeuristic and aggressive, and suggests trauma theory must transcend psychoanalysis through ethics. She explains that an ethical approach would include self-reflection and an interrogation of why we are compelled to study trauma, or why so many global atrocities remain hidden and unremarkable for study. Pieter Vermeulen describes a more overt connection between trauma and politics. He refers to modern society’s vulnerability to globalized violence and the state’s response for controlling and manipulating the subject’s relation to the state through bio-politics.

Informed by the philosophical works of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Roberto Esposito, Vermeulen elucidates how bio-politics contributes to an understanding of both trauma and effects of globalization. The many discourses that expound our knowledge of trauma theory and cross-pollinate the agencies, therapies, and literary expressions of trauma altogether exemplify the need to work through multiple catastrophic events. Bio-politics contains trauma in the sense that the proliferation of studies, treatments, and institutions help maintain the state’s hegemonic role in protecting its citizens. “A failure to adequately mediate the aftermath of trauma only perpetuates cycles of violence or retraumatization, yet our exposure to trauma is inescapable” (Vermeulen 142). It is through the mental health and cultural institutions and discourses that “trauma” supplies the “technology” for sustaining and maintaining political power (143).

*The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, 2013, offers an alternative to the deconstruction methods and Western bias popular in trauma theory. The Western way, so to speak, emphasizes the telling of stories for the purpose of attaining closure. Non-Western ways of coping with trauma include silence and other non-verbal
performances including dance. Ananya Kabir acknowledges the universalizing effects of modern society and technologies (court systems, education, telecommunications, etc.) on non-Western society—those institutions endemic to “bourgeois formations” (67). However, through her analysis of Phnom Penh’s Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (commemorating the Cambodian Holocaust by the Khmer Rouge), Kabir suggests that theorizing trauma through evidence of fragmented narratives is not the only means for studying trauma. She searches for alternative approaches and discovers a multi-modal, hybridized method of theorizing trauma in her study of the museum. Kabir observes the juxtaposition of Eastern culture (Buddhist shrines) against the Eurocentric representations of torture (images painted in the style of social realism), combined with hands-on displays that mimic objects in the paintings (inviting participation). She compares the Cambodian traditional dance to the performative function of the museum objects and notes the irony resulting from the East-West styles of mourning and representation, commemorating the Khmer Rouge atrocities within the bourgeois space of a museum.

Witnessing and Narrating Traumatic Events

According to the OED, the old English word, “witness,” meant both knowledge, as in gaining wisdom, and attestation of a fact, as in providing testimony or evidence (“Witness”). In its current vernacular, witness is associated with factual evidence and historical documentation. During the interviews and recordings of Holocaust survivors, however, witnessing became associated with traumatic memory and the reintegration of the traumatized ego. Dori Laub, psychiatrist, interviewer, and survivor of the Holocaust, has written extensively of the nature of witnessing and how it contributes to the healing of both individuals and communities. In one of his most noted examples of the importance of a survivor’s witnessing and testifying to a
traumatic experience, regardless of factual errors, Laub recounts a Holocaust survivor’s sudden, passionate memory that enabled her to tell a buried memory. In this case, the trauma narrative provided Laub evidence of trauma’s effects on the survivor’s memory, rather than having exhibited empirical evidence. In contrast to the juridical purpose for testifying one’s trauma, the Holocaust survivor’s testimony supplied evidence of witnessing to heal, in addition to adjudicate. The survivor’s testimony afforded a heretofore-fragmented memory that assumed coherence through the narrative structure of testimony. Like the flashbacks that return the living to the traumatic event, yet unlike them in that she was able to narrate the memory with words, Laub believed her testimony proved she had suffered a trauma. He also explained that for the survivors living in the midst of the Holocaust, there were no witnesses—no outside “other” to whom one could voice, narrate, or convey the horror—and therefore, the incomprehensibility of the ongoing trauma could not yet be told or received (“Truth and Testimony”). In 2002, Laub similarly explains that there is no “coherent narrative” about 9/11, which is the nature of massive trauma. Although Laub believes some narrative must be constructed to explain and understand 9/11, he also cautions against the revenge narratives employed by government and military spokesmen (“September 11 – An Event Without a Voice”).

Witnessing trauma transmits more than factual testimony; witnessing trauma encompasses memory, history, and artistic expression. Clinical psychotherapist Robert Neimeyer explains why constructing narratives—organizations of experience in narrative form—is necessary for overcoming trauma’s negative effects (“Mourning and Meaning”). Neimeyer assigns the inability to construct the internal self-narrative—the “micro-narratives” that inform everyday life and render the world meaningful—to traumatic experience. He also believes the
various ritualistic and artistic genres for mourning are also narrative constructions for making sense of trauma (”A social constructionist account of grief”). Eulogies, memoirs, films, and lamentations can be interpreted, for example, as to whether they seek causes (comprehensibility) or strive to accept the new reality (accommodation). When understood as social and narrative constructions, grief and trauma assume highly complex cognitive deliberations.

Thus, narratives and oral testimonies may more easily result in successful mourning and recovery from trauma in that they engage dialogue and narrative construction. Even the films of Claude Lanzmann and Alain Resnais that presented multiple Holocaust testimonies on the one hand, and struggles to narrate the horror of Hiroshima through fragmented memories and mise-en-scène, combined the visual with the verbal to construct a narrative, albeit in such a way that the films were open to multiple interpretations. The films of Lanzmann and Resnais call attention to film conventions for storytelling. Resnais frequently uses mise-en-scene in Hiroshima Mon Amor that effectively jostles the perspectives between witness, narrator, and witness-to-the witness. In Shoah, Lanzmann probes the memories of Holocaust survivors and witnesses in real time, without documentary film references or images that might challenge or authenticate their testimonies. One of the effects of viewing these testimonies is the heightened awareness of non-verbal gestures, silences, and other types of verbal utterances that convey emotion or horror without having to be explained. The viewer is not presented definitive proofs and is, thus, placed in a position of evaluating as well as witnessing. It may be said, therefore, that these two films function as meta-texts that seek comprehension and significance, if not resolution, of the trauma.

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48 I am referencing Claude Lanzmann’s film, Shoah, 1985, and Alain Resnais’ film, Hiroshima Mon Amour, 1959.
In contrast to the more obvious constructed nature of narrative, news images appear as unmediated documentation, and may be trusted as clear evidence, or considered negative, given to their popular dissemination without critical analysis. The mass media’s representation of traumatic events consists of repetitive imagery, much like the flashbacks of PTSD victims. Yet, when survivors possess control over visual and recording media, as Lindahl discovered in his work with survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, they may be more likely to gain distance from the event (“Legends of Hurricane Katrina”). Their witness to the event is mediated through cameras or through the face-to-face interaction with the interviewer. The need to do something in the aftermath of a catastrophic event may have something to do with the need to become distanced from the event, to quell the anxiety and stop the recycling of upsetting images. Photographing the event is an act of recording for future reference. It is made with the hope that words will come later, providing meaning to the trauma (Hirsch; Kaplan).

Film studies professor Leshu Torchin believes there is, potentially, a “transformative power” in images that can be used to bear witness to a traumatic past and activate viewers to recognize present day atrocities. In her assessment of the Armenian genocide website, TheForgotten.Org, she suggests the site’s use of flash animation that produces flickering images with context immediately conveys the fragmented memories and haunting effects of repressed history. From this flash opening, the site provides historical documentation and oral testimonies, balancing the simulation of memory with history and witnessing.
Mourning and Memorializing: Processing and Politicizing Grief

Mourning rituals enable the surviving community to become distanced from their loss, to relinquish the social bonds and emotional attachments that had heretofore inhabited and shaped their respective identities and relationships. “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 237). Freud attributed the behaviors associated with mourning—loss of interest in others or the outside world—to the fear of experiencing greater pain and loss. To reconnect with the world would in essence, be abandoning the loved one and reminded that there was no “other” who could reflect one’s ego and identity in quite the same way. The mourning process thus involved releasing each memory, desire, and emotional trigger that bound the mourner’s libido or ego to the lost love. Freud
believed the psychic energy required for releasing attachment and resuming daily life (“decathexis”) required time, unique to each individual.

Mourning, as a process of decathexis—the re-integration of the self and the self with society—is seldom pathological (in the sense that the grieving process is never-ending, is evidenced by prolonged depression and avoidance of former enjoyments or company, and what Freud described as melancholia). It is buttressed by social and cultural rituals. Public rituals, including religious and secular vigils, spontaneous shrines, and protest gatherings, similarly augment the public mourning of widespread, catastrophic losses. Because many contemporary psychologists believe the psychic and social self is a recursive and iterative evolution, mourning is considered a sociological, as well as psychological, process for constructing meaning (Hartman; Neimeyer). Neimeyer states that part of the mourning process includes conforming to, or actively resisting, the “dominant cultural narratives that script the ‘proper’ performance of grief in a manner coherent with the prevailing social order” (496). The religious relics, photographs of loved ones, flowers, and candles left at spontaneous shrines or official memorials illustrate mourning conventions and predominant cultural narratives. Although Neimeyer acknowledges that grief narratives may either “conform to or resist… the prevailing social order,” he also avers the grieving process should be discursive: negotiated through custom and practical politics, between individual and society, and ultimately enabling the bereaved to maintain an emotional bond with the deceased. As was seen with the victims of 9/11, the individual deaths were each memorialized as heroic and used by the U.S. government to sanction revenge politics.
Anthropologists Carmen Ortiz and Cristina Sanchez-Carratero observe reproachful signs or protests against the dominant political forces are frequently placed at spontaneous memorials. Ortiz compared the use of photographs in the grassroots memorials filling the streets of New York after the 9/11 attacks with the spontaneous shrines filling the Madrid train stations and Sanchez-Carratero meticulously studied the spontaneous shrines that appeared and multiplied around the Madrid train stations shortly after the terrorist bombing. She analyzed messages and observed onlooker behavior, noting that the materials used for writing, including walls, t-shirts, and paper, each carried significance. Even the simple question “Why?” could convey anger or despair depending on the manner in which it was written. Such memorials invoke a sense of community, including resentment against the forces and institutions that either caused or were unable to prevent the tragic event. Sanchez-Carretero formed an interdisciplinary team composed of anthropologists, philologists, and librarians to create the Atocha Memorial Project using the artifacts left at the spontaneous shrines as commemorative texts. The crudely drawn and ephemeral materials used to construct grassroots shrines enhance their authenticity and invite onlookers to witness traces of human suffering and grief.

Whether described as spontaneous, grassroots, makeshift, or vernacular, the ritualistic placement and offerings of keepsakes, flowers, teddy bears, flags, religious relics, photographs, and messages at sites of tragedy or death are integral to public mourning, despite or perhaps because of their temporary existence and folk-like qualities (Doss; Carratero-Sanchez; Haskins; Ortiz; Santino; Sturken). The stages of grief, like traumas that begin with shock and sadness and transition through denial and anger to acceptance, are reflected in spontaneous, “grassroots”
memorials. However, as public monuments, these memorials also produce an ideological stance by virtue of their unofficial status.

If we assume that memorials generate emotional affects that, at best, inspire empathy, restorative justice, and also psychological healing, then should we expect the same for online memorials? Online memorials merge private mourning with public witnessing and may provide a type of group therapy (Hartman; Walter, et. al.). Although families and survivors of trauma who share trauma narratives and memories may obtain therapeutic benefits, many scholars believe the general public also benefits from these online postings (Arthur 73; Hartman 541; Walter. et. al. 5). Yet, there is also the possibility of public mischief or “trolling” (uploading inflammatory content for the purpose of igniting outrage) should public comments be added to the memorial.

The arguments used to positively describe digital media and online communications are similar to those crediting online memorials with therapeutic benefits. A few of these arguments include: the formation of community and the cultural capital afforded by collaboration and social media. Disaster archive/memorials including the September 11 Digital Archive and Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive & WBUR Oral History Project conducted extensive outreach into the affected communities, organizing recording sessions and networking the various support services, which social psychologists agree are critical for overcoming post-traumatic stress (Bravo, et. al.; Charuvastra and Cloitre). Although these face-to-face actions took place prior to the digital archive’s publication, varieties of media technologies used to document, share, represent, and remember the traumatic event, were already shaping public mourning. Particularly with the Boston Marathon bombing, the media technologies used to document and communicate the trauma were also used to share grief, express condolences, and
reinforce the imagined community. From witnessing to mourning, and from documentation to collective memory, online memorials and disaster archives function similarly. Both are products of public deliberation—individual and community negotiations—and both incorporate online literacy conventions, such as collaborative authorship. There are differences, however. Online memorials are more often celebratory and the grief narratives generally provide a holistic, collective memory of an individual. The disaster archive, in contrast, does not attempt to structure the myriad of documents, images, and narratives into a coherent portrait of either individuals or events.

While it may not always be possible to incorporate restorative justice in the wake of mourning, an examination of political messages in online memorials and spontaneous shrines would help us determine if there is a difference in opinion between public and official sentiments. For example, documents and messages inscribed at sidewalk memorials and ingested by Our Marathon reveal wishes for justice, although the term was not defined, and there was a preponderance of symbols for peace. In the aftermath of the Tsarnaev trial connected with the Boston Marathon Bombings, the family of victim, Martin Richard, contested against the recommendation of the death penalty. Despite their tragic losses, their opinion is consistent with Massachusetts’s law and the majority of Boston’s registered voters according to a poll by Boston’s NPR news station, WBUR (Khalid “Death Penalty For Tsarnaev Increasingly Unpopular”).

Additionally, close readings of the material contents of these digital memorials also reveal how common, emotionally laden materials produce a community of mourners. Erika Doss explains that the projection of feelings through twenty-first century monuments and memorials
exemplifies the importance of “affect” for American culture (14). Sanctioned by public art programs that increasingly assume social and moral responsibility for diverse populations, the artist/designer is encouraged to reflect on the pain of others and anticipate how an audience relates as witness to the pain (Bennett). Affect, understood as the physical expression of emotion (Doss), the public’s embodied and empathic responses to trauma (Bennett; Cvetovich), and the quality or intensity of emotion transmitted by various media including monuments and memorials (Grusin; Massumi) is a dynamic concept that directs the researcher to study human interactivity with monuments and memorials as opposed to interpreting the symbolism or ideology of monuments and memorials.

Grief is socially affective and even private mourning and withdrawal from society is socially sanctioned by religious ritual and secular custom (such as bereavement leave). Online memorials extend mourning spatially, reaching people far outside the family or local community, and cognitively, facilitating deepening and continuing dialogues with the deceased or bereaved. While it is expected that viewing images of the bereaved and listening to or reading poignant narratives would elicit emotional empathy, it is also likely that deeper reflection and cognitive empathy may result from sustained interaction with the site. Cognitive empathy—a deliberate identification with another that is generated by intellect instead of emotion—complements emotional empathy in that it enables sensitivity without narcissistic or harmful attachments (Nummenmaa, et. al.; Pulin, et. al.; Smith). Disaster archives and online memorials that purport to help communities mourn and heal from a calamity may achieve this through facilitating both emotional and cognitive empathy. Optimally, these digital memorial/archives offer a space and
platform that provides an alternative to either over-exposure to sorrowful emotion or vengeful politics, characteristic of broadcast media.

The disaster archives are full of documents that witness the disaster as well as those that commemorate and memorialize the victims. Witnessing the event, whether fully narrated for an oral historian or therapist, or documented through a recording medium, facilitates empathy from the outside. Secondary witnessing can be empathic and ethical when viewers are self-reflective and use cognitive as well as affective skills of interpretation. How do we know if the archive’s amalgamation of oral histories, images, and other documents that provide witnessing and distancing from the disaster invokes ethical change? From a psychological perspective, we may ask if both donors and viewers experienced an emotional catharsis from participating in the archive. Sociologically, we might question why some populations were not represented in the archive, or whether political and economic inequities affected a community’s ability to publicly mourn. And, culturally, we might query whether the fragmented memories and images documented in the disaster archive aren’t also illustrative of a postmodern, traumatized culture.

**Summary**

Trauma is both a psychosocial and cultural phenomenon. As a psychosocial phenomenon, trauma afflicts individuals and societies in an interdependent way, resulting in pathologies and/or emotional and spiritual growth. I presented a selection of clinical studies on the development of PTSD resulting from massive disasters and acts of terrorism. These selections were based on whether entire communities were affected by a large, catastrophic event and whether there was evidence of mass media coverage or other means for collectively witnessing and responding to the disaster. The studies included Western and non-Western societies responding to natural or
man-made disasters. My primary focus, however, was given to terrorist-inspired acts that affected populations in modern Western cultures. Key findings from my literature reviews included correlations between the risks of developing PTSD and the intensity and proximity of the afflicted individuals and communities to the disaster; greater speed in recovery and development of PTG (posttraumatic growth) by individuals living in communities with strong social relations and social support infrastructures; and increased risks of PTSD resulting from frequent and intense exposure to mass media coverage of disasters. The recommended treatments for individuals suffering from PTSD were also derived from clinical study and generally favored exposure treatment, accompanied by cognitive behavior therapies.

My discussion of trauma as a cultural phenomenon was also biased toward modern Western societies. My review of literary and cultural criticism of trauma began with Cathy Caruth’s influential “trauma theory,” in which she bases her postmodern methods of literary analysis on the psychological dimensions of trauma. In addition to Caruth’s psychoanalytic interpretation of various literary forms that address or evoke traumatic events, other disciplines address trauma as a cultural phenomenon. I included the works of anthropologists, folklorists, and sociologists who study communities affected by large-scale catastrophic events. One of the key findings from the review of these selected studies echoed similar findings from clinical research: that the local customs and social relations of a community are best suited for resilience to and recovery from a global disaster, given the cultural and social infrastructure remains intact.

In the chapter that follows, I examine online memorials and disaster archive/memorials as discursive spaces for sharing grief, maintaining connections with the deceased, and negotiating social relationships in the aftermath of a collectively experienced trauma. The politicization of a
traumatic event becomes evident, not only in mass media coverage and state policy, but also in the public grieving and mourning practices. Online memorials and disaster archives attempt to restore individual and collective mental health while simultaneously documenting the trauma and forging a collective memory of healing and recovery. In this next chapter, I examine the displacement of public/private and subjective/objective divisions in online memorials and disaster archives. It is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid a Western bias when analyzing the effects of digital media on individual and collective mourning. Adorno challenged cultural critics to stand both outside and inside the culture they analyzed, and avoid the belief in “transcendent contemplation” (“Cultural Criticism and Society” 33). He later added his famous statement, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (34). This acute awareness of one’s position in relation to the object of criticism is echoed in Michael Rothberg’s invitation to add knowledge of one’s subjectivity and relations to the outside world when contemplating trauma (xvii). Lessons learned from our study of individually and collectively experienced trauma should include critically assessing the public’s role of witnessing, narrating, and representing trauma. The online trends to publicly witness and narrate traumatic events illuminate the varying degrees of self-reflection and ethical responsibility that individuals assume for the collective memory and recovery from disasters.
“What happens when the unique death is taken up into all the codes and rituals of mourning, when the singular event comes to be marked by the designated spaces and times of mourning, when all talk of death comes to be inflected by a prescribed rhetoric? Can there be other words in which to mourn?”

*Derrida, “Roland Barthes”*

“The picture of me that you tag is not me, it is the becoming something new as you pass me along.”

*Stephen Hartman, “Cybermourning”*

At the time of Barthes’ funeral, Derrida wrestled with his desire to eulogize his friend, knowing that his words were uttered in the ritualized context of remembering and forgetting. His shared remembrances that offered insight into his friendship with Barthes and illuminated Barthes’ way of thinking were also products of funeral oratory—an overarching force for letting go, finalizing the relationship, and forgetting the pain of his loss. In *Work of Mourning*, Derrida acknowledged his eulogy represented the end of dialogue between Barthes and himself and that eulogizing his friend simultaneously eliminated the singularity of this event. Other deaths of family and friends would similarly require him to assess his relationships, invoking condolences when emotions and memories could not be verbalized. His relationship with Barthes that included nuanced exchanges, silences, and non-verbal gestures could not be resurrected through his words, now absorbed by the commemorative ritual of speaking of or for the dead. Whatever Derrida expressed, his words marked the end of their relationship and exposed the infidelity of
mourning—a consequence of reducing a life lived and loved to a process of forgetting, akin to abandonment.

Would Derrida’s eulogy have been expressed differently had he created a cybermemorial to Barthes? Derrida’s interrogation of his own mourning advances an ethical model for examining the ritual acts of mourning and collections of memories inscribed in online memorials. Through his self-acknowledged struggle to avoid oratory clichés, Derrida enlightens us to some of the dilemmas when speaking for the other, including narcissism, guilt, and political expediency. Without knowing how his friend would respond to his speech and without knowing the effects of his words, Derrida could not say with any certainty whether he wasn’t at some level, objectifying his friend. Instead of using his friendship to help his friend know himself, (as well as Derrida learning more about himself through his friend’s responses and affirmations), Derrida was examining his friendship in public and somewhat foreign way. “Speaking is impossible, but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one’s sadness” (72).

I used Derrida’s reflection on mourning to examine cybermemorials and digital archive/memorials. The collections of tributes, cards, and condolences often exhibit the clichéd oratory Derrida explored as a conundrum. When examining grief narratives and images in disaster archive/memorials, I questioned, “How do I know if I am witnessing statements of grief or political expediency? How do I know whether our socio-technical frameworks for gathering, sorting, and displaying grief narratives aren’t also excluding and defining what type of grieving
is permissible? Are there narratives and images of grieving that depict unsettled grievances, hidden lest they incite outrage but, perhaps necessary for seeking justice?"  

Although Derrida’s “speeches” were neither intended for book publication, nor did they address multiple deaths caused by catastrophic events, his alternation between speaking about his friendship and using his friend’s manner of speaking and thinking to demonstrate his fidelity, elucidate an ethical form of witnessing. Derrida’s *Work of Mourning* demonstrates a deconstruction of mourning with added compassion. His words are intended to soothe others as they simultaneously enable him to speak his truth. Cybermemorials and disaster archive/memorials, similarly convey the work of mourning. Their compilations of tributes, narratives, condolence letters, and images reveal various perspectives and stages of grief. In time, will these grief narratives become less tinged with emotion and assume significance for their evidentiary and historic value? Will these documents of grief lead to justice?  

By justice, I am referring to actions taken not only by the legal and political institutions to address acts of violence that result in mass casualties, but also by local organizations, secular and religious, that engage community dialogue. An example of the latter is “restorative justice,” a non-threatening forum requiring full disclosure by all parties (stakeholders). Whether victim or perpetrator, the stakeholders identify the multiple harms caused to the community, and follow through with coordinated, mutually decided upon solutions for repairing the harms (“What is  

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49 The photograph of Emmett Till’s bludgeoned face in his open casket was provocative (as was the decision to open his casket) and challenged any viewer to confront the injustice of racial terrorism. The decision by Emmett’s mother to expose the crime at a time when more salutary customs for mourning and remembrance are practiced, was a sacrificial act—rather than edify her son as a martyr, she chose to mourn his death as a plea for justice.
Restorative Justice”). Among the many grief narratives and images I encountered in the digital archive/memorials I examined were items that warranted further investigation, such as the images of SWAT teams in Boston’s neighborhood, Watertown, and questions regarding the overall purpose of the archive/memorial.

From Derrida’s work of mourning, I suggest an ethical approach for examining publicly grieving and documenting catastrophic events includes examinations of self to other, and seeking opportunities for restorative justice. I begin this chapter by examining the ritual acts of online mourning, including my recent experience with online grieving. From this introspective account, I establish a more personal perspective for analyzing dimensions of mourning on the Internet. However, in online memorials of victims of widespread disasters, social networks appear to be as integral to their long-term preservation and functioning as they are to individual online memorials. In this chapter, I assess how social and familial networks help cushion the pain through binding customs and affirmations of identity with the deceased as well as with each other. We can, I believe, develop a methodology for understanding mourning on the Internet by analyzing how natural and man-made disasters around the globe have been represented in online memorials. The cybermemorials examined in this chapter established “safe” procedures for soliciting and gathering collections of memories and frameworks for mourning on the Internet, regardless of the cause of death.

A Personal Account of Cyber mourning

Within a few months of discovering that her brain tumor was inoperable, my good friend, Jan, died in November 2014. Notice of her death was texted to me and I felt lost in my bereavement after receiving this abrupt message of her death. Aside from making a customary
home visit, I grieved alone. That is, until I visited her online memorial. Although the family had not arranged a formal service, they commissioned Harden Pauli Funeral Home of Eustis, Florida, to create her memorial website.

![Figure 3: Screenshot of Harden Pauli Funeral Home's tribute page for Jan with my shared remembrance](image)

Jan’s memorial website encourages visitors to participate through sharing memories, linking to social media accounts, and embellishing her memorial with virtual artifacts. The funeral home website refers to its memorials as tributes that honor life, comparing them to both newspaper obituaries and social media platforms (“Honoring Life” Harden Pauli). The box for inserting a written memory is expandable and the public may add comments. Once saved, however, the uploaded statements and photographs cannot be retracted. The site does not specify the duration of memorial websites as do many other funeral homes and online memorial services, nor does it reveal its policies for long-term hosting. For this information, the funeral directors
must be contacted. Despite the bright colors and inviting white space for uploading memories, the ever-present corporate logo and sidebar of advertisements diminished the “honor” and singularity of her life.

I subsequently visited her Facebook page and was surprised to see it had not been memorialized. Facebook’s policy for deceased members includes the long-term preservation of their pages, transfiguring them into memorials. They remain open to previously established friends but block new friend requests or messages (“Memorialized Accounts” Facebook). Jan’s page was virtually alive and expandable and I found the invitation to “send a friend request” disturbing. I was struck by the dissonance between her being dead and her “live” Facebook status. Nevertheless, my grief dissipated as I read the recent posts by friends and family. Uplifting reminiscences placed at the top of the page replaced the mournful comments posted just before and on the day of her death. The trajectory from loss to recovery was augmented and recontextualized by my ability to scroll further down the page. Jan’s words and links assumed greater significance for me with each re-reading.

I believed I was not only refreshing my memories of her or learning new things about her, but that I was also reinforcing her virtual presence. Jan was not disappearing from my life, but on the contrary, was becoming firmly integrated into my social media life. Sharing memories of Jan’s life with family and friends enabled me to “heal” through the grieving process. I realized after writing my recollections that I had used both first and third person perspectives—that I was speaking to her and about her. At this stage of mourning, I realized I did not want to lose my relationship with her and that I was not ready to accept the finality of her death. The desire to maintain a living presence of the deceased through an online forum is a prevalent theme in both
the cybermemorials and public disaster memorials. I understood how online mourning could prolong a fantasy—an imagined communication with my friend, albeit unidirectional and dispersed through her social network. After I received appreciative comments from Jan’s friends and family, I felt my social connection with Jan and her friends and family was solid and long lasting.

*Cybermourning in Private and Public Memorials*

Stephen Hartman explores the enigmatic status of the dead as they are remembered and eulogized in dynamic, online memorials (“Cybermourning”). The ritualized process of mourning in Western societies (including wakes, funerals, obituaries, and shrines) effectively controls and orchestrates the time and space for private and public grieving. When ritualized mourning occurs in cybermemorials, the digital networks and prosumer behaviors of social media radically alter time and space. Uploading memories and images in the form of digital objects, or lighting the virtual candle, are ritualized performances of mourning in cybermemorials, displaced from their original context and freed from a static space or time. Because the memorial is neither confined to place, nor fixed in time, visitors to the cybermemorial may reinte grate memories and reassess one’s relationship to the deceased indefinitely. The virtual presence of the deceased and evidence of ongoing mourning through updated and refreshed content may interfere with the release of memory and psychic energy that Freud believed was necessary for resuming normal life (“Mourning and Melancholia” 237). Yet, as mourning is also a sociological phenomenon, the adjustment and reintegration by the bereaved into society involves the reconstruction of the social self (Hartman “Cybermourning,” Neimeyer “Mourning and Meaning”). Cybermemorials display the iterative and transformative process of remembering and letting go through the
shared condolences and ritual performances, like lighting a virtual candle or laying a virtual flower.

Forgetting or ending one’s relationship with the deceased as Derrida painfully experienced and recounted, however, is indefinitely postponed in cybermemorials. The digital objects associated with the deceased are dynamic, neither owned by friends and family, nor stable enough to construct a biography or singular accounting of one’s relationship to the deceased. Hartman describes the digital objects of remembrance as enigmatic, “…Capable of forming new relationships as they become refreshed, repurposed, and remediated on the Internet” (“Cybermourning” 460).

The benefits of extended mourning include the realization that grieving is neither solitary nor temporally fixed. Open-access to cybermemorials and their felicitous adoption of socio-technical conventions (such as links to social media applications) promote public mourning, but these benefits can also become liabilities. The possibility for ongoing dialogue and engagement with the deceased, as designed by Facebook tribute pages and online memorials and naturalized by social media platforms, poses ethical dilemmas. For example, a family’s right to privacy may be threatened by the continual remediation (literally and figuratively) of the deceased through linked images and stories, heretofore unknown or unbidden by the deceased’s family. Unlike the silent gaze of the deceased’s image looking back at us from our memories and scrapbooks—images exclusive, perhaps, to our eyes only—the cybermemorial images and narratives are non-exclusive, owned and shared by many, and exchanged like currency to maintain the deceased’s social life.
These are, of course, ethical issues that are only partially addressed by the memorial website’s contribution and copyright guidelines. Facebook’s “Data Policy” describes how it acquires and uses the personal information of its users, and includes suggestions for limiting public access. Until the Facebook account is deleted, or the account’s information is no longer needed, however, Facebook owns the information. Funeral homes and corporate online memorial services also post the terms and conditions of accessing and owning the content. Legacy.com’s terms and conditions include the irrevocable, perpetual, and non-exclusive rights to all content uploaded to its site and imorial.com’s terms include the affirmation that all content is the intellectual property of web site.

The socio-technical conventions used to promulgate accessibility and sharing on the network extend to all types of cybermemorials, including disaster archives. Like funeral homes, online memorial providers feature social media links and promote the sharing of messages. Such sites facilitate contributions for people affected by the disaster and enable comments and social network linking by the public-at large. For example, Legacy.com provides “Memorial Sites” in addition to individual obituaries for the purpose of grouping individuals who shared common traits or whose deaths were caused by the same circumstances.
On Legacy’s New Zealand site, the collection, “New Zealand Earthquake Victims Obituary” contains newspaper and funeral home obituaries for the victims and a guestbook for the public to share memories or condolences, upload pictures or videos, light a candle, or send flowers. The side menu bar categorizes the guestbook contributions by item type and provides links to related content, providing alternate paths for exploration as well as revealing the more popular way to participate in online mourning. Legacy.com also features major U.S. disasters of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The memorial sites for Boston Marathon Bombing and the Virginia Tech Shootings, respectively, are similarly in design and function to the “New Zealand Earthquake Victims Obituary” (Figure 2). As with all Legacy memorial sites, the guest
books accommodate multiple types of remembrances and the site claims, “This Guest Book will remain online permanently.” A single image representing the disaster is placed against a white page, cluttered with advertisements until the site visitor accesses the individual obituaries or guest book.

In contrast, Legacy.com’s memorial site, “Remember September 11, 2001,” (http://www.legacy.com/sept11/home.aspx) exhibits a dramatic red background and rotating banner of photographs with text commanding the viewer to “Remember the city,” Remember going to work,” “Remember the morning,” “ and “Remember everyone.” There are no advertisements on this page and the obituaries and guest books may be referenced attack location (e.g. Pentagon) or via the individual names. This memorial site represents national mourning through its commands and relative absence of commercialism (ads still appear on individual memorial guest books). It is significant to note that the site promotes public online mourning by enabling visitors to channel their sentiments through sharing and linking, whether the individual is personally known or not.

Regardless of the potential for generating widespread empathy and civic solidarity, which open access and participatory policies provide, the hosting site, not the families, owns the content and creates policies for distribution and preservation. Imorial (www.imorial.com), another memorial hosting site, provides memorial space for groups. Group memorial, “2011 christchurch earthquake,” (http://www.legacy.com/ns/-new zealand earthquake victims-obituary/148798192) is much less developed than the group memorials on Legacy’s site. Although there are few tributes posted on this site, family members or friends may create individual memorials as elaborate as a Facebook page. In the example given, there are several
options for contributing content in a wide variety of formats. Of course, unlike Facebook and
disaster archive/memorials in general, strangers are permitted to connect with or add content to
an individual’s memorial page.

Loss of privacy and ownership of memories by the deceased’s family and friends is attenuated by including them in developing policies and permissions for accessing their digital objects of mourning. Digital archive/memorials of catastrophic events, serving and representing large populations similarly involve a variety of constituencies and organizations to create policies that protect the privacy of individuals and groups. Following the 9/11 attacks, Cantor Fitzgerald created an online memorial for each of its employees and the employees of its affiliates who died in the World Trade Center attacks (Figure 3). The memorial designates each employee’s “tribute” as part of the Cantor Fitzgerald “family,” representing each individual on uniformly formatted pages and administered by the website. Although the site calls for submissions by people who knew the deceased, I read several tributes written by “strangers” who felt compelled to respond despite not personally knowing to whom they were paying tribute. Nevertheless, the memorial’s unified design and fields of content signified the encompassing presence of Cantor Fitzgerald and the addition of the website’s family relief fund reinforced the sense of group identity, community loss, and the importance of maintaining these group relationships.
From my review of the preceding cybermemorials, I discerned three functions enhanced by the digitization and networking of media: 1) commemorating and honoring lives lost, 2) creating and expanding a community of mourners through socio-technical frameworks, and 3) negotiating and co-producing content while also limiting both donor and the deceased’s rights to privacy. Celebrating a life lived as opposed to mourning a life lost is customary in some funerals and is especially prevalent in cybermemorials. Despite the somber black background and single
candle that adorns each Cantor Fitzgerald employee’s tribute page, the tenor of these tributes are celebratory and uplifting, comparable to other online memorials.

Cybermemorials also sustain the deceased’s community of mourners by embedding social media into the cybermemorial and soliciting emotional responses and shared memories from site visitors. The social network of mourners, represented and sustained by the renewed content and refreshed order of items on the website, demonstrates how well the cybermemorial keeps relationships with the deceased, “alive.” And, while families and friends enjoy the highest tiers of access and policy control as evidenced by the cybermemorials I visited, the tributes and other documents are accessible by a public, larger than and perhaps unknown to the deceased’s family. That is, members of the deceased’s online network may possess rights of access to shared memories blocked to “unfriended” family members. In other words, online mourning may compromise intellectual property rights and other issues of privacy that emerge from the deceased’s digital heritage. The possibilities for restricting or expanding access to cybermemorials range along a private/public continuum, and as the public becomes more invested in creating digital wills (designating resources and solutions for managing one’s private, digital artifacts), access becomes more complicated.

Commemorating and honoring lives lost, participating in a community of mourners through socio-technical frameworks, and negotiating and co-producing content are dimensions of online mourning also evident in disaster archive/memorials. In disaster archive/memorials, however, there is a greater urgency for preserving cultural heritage, solidifying membership in the affected community, and building resilience. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, public memorials are subject to contested politics and the reappropriation of the collective memory or
dominant narrative represented by the public memorial. Digital disaster archive/memorials are informed by dimensions of political values and civic, national, or ethnic identities among other dimension of grief, mourning, and recovery. The social network of the bereaved community, represented and sustained by the archive/memorial’s collections is critical not just to sustain interest in the site, but also to generate civic identity and solidarity, and to prepare for future catastrophic events. Although many funeral homes and online memorial services provide resources for handling grief and mourning, their function is mainly to provide space for connecting to and commemorating the deceased’s life and network.

**Archive/memorials of Disasters Caused by Natural Forces**

Are there significant differences between disaster archives of natural versus terrorist caused catastrophic events? According to several psychological and cultural studies of communities afflicted by large-scale disasters, man-made causes produce more traumatic stressors than do natural causes (Charuvastra and Cloitre, Galea, et. al., McFarlane and Williams, Micalizzi, Miller, et.al.). Whether these stressors manifest into full-blown PTSD depends on several factors, including individuals’ psychic conditions, previous traumatic experiences, and the viability of the local, socio-political infrastructures. Nevertheless, many disaster archives of the twenty-first century similarly archive and memorialize natural and man-made cataclysmic events. The three examples I examine below—Hurricane Karina (2005) –the earthquakes in New Zealand (2010 and 2011), and the earthquake and tsunami in Japan (2011)—illustrate
archive/memorials commemorating natural disasters that draw upon the precedent for archiving social media and public participation following the 9/11 attacks.  

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated parts of New Orleans and the Gulf coastal communities from Texas to Florida, resulting in great loss of life and property. One month later, Hurricane Rita wreaked similar destruction in the same areas, and together, the hurricanes represented traumatic memories and for many, displacement from the security of home and neighborhood. The Hurricane Memory Bank (HMB) adopted the then recently created Omeka platform and claimed to “foster some positive legacies by allowing the people affected by these storms to tell their stories in their own words, which as part of the historical record will remain accessible to a wide audience for generations to come” (“About” HMB). The archive collected images, oral histories, videos, and various documents contributed by the public from 2005 to 2012.

![Screenshot of the Hurricane Memory Bank](image)

Figure 6: Screenshot of the Hurricane Memory Bank. The majority of its collections document the devastation to property and environment and the public response to relief efforts and relocations.

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50 I must mention that misguided and opportunistic exploitation of natural resources and human labor has deprived ecosystems of many vital resources that provide resilience to violent natural disasters. Likewise, such exploitation has deprived certain human communities of adequate architecture and social infrastructures for withstanding disasters, as evidenced by Haiti’s vulnerability to its 2010 earthquake.
The desire to foster some positive legacies indicates an alternative perspective to the largely negative portrayals of the afflicted residents of New Orleans that were being presented by the news media. One of the questions guiding the interviews, “How has your life, or the Gulf Coast, changed since 2005?” enabled the interviewees to reflect on their experiences, often eliciting memories of strangers assisting strangers and other expressions of community solidarity. Many of these oral histories and written narratives provide examples of the bonding and bridging social capital that emerged in the community relief efforts and ad hoc triage centers. Bonding social capital refers to the emotionally close and supportive ties that exist between families and friends, whereas bridging social capital describes organizations and associations that cut across barriers of race, income, or ethnicity (Aldrich and Meyer “Social Capital and Community Resilience”). A third type of social capital, linking, occurs when residents have access to agencies of power. The authors contend that residents of New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward failed to bridge or link social capital to people and resources beyond the neighborhood, despite the archive’s narratives of resilience or responses by local aid worker, health professionals, and law enforcement (HMB).

The collections represent a wide array of local organizations and individuals as well as an eclectic mix of stories, photographs, documents, recordings, and websites. They are primarily composed of photographs and there are few items depicting memorials or rituals of mourning as evidenced in the other disaster archives examined. Distinguishing this archive from the S11DA, the HMB collections and many of its items present highly descriptive commentary provided by the donors. Although the HMB curatorial staff originally planned to create a more folksonomic, participatory archive, the social and political environment—then critical of both the governance
of the relief efforts and of the suffering populations—precluded the staff from opening the contents to tags or comments (Brennan and Mills “Why Collecting History Online is Web 1.5”). The curatorial staff collaborated with several local organizations, universities and colleges, and national emergency response agencies to develop and share their collections with HMB. These organizations often provided outreach into the local neighborhoods that helped establish trust and a willingness to share personal accounts. As Brennan states in her report of the project, contributors retained ownership and copyright protection of their donated items, as well having exercised exclusive control over tags and public access.

Similar in purpose and integration of multiple organizations and institutions, QuakeStudies provides New Zealanders a digital archive of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. Unlike the HMB, however, this digital archive separates its personal testimonials (QuakeStories) from its sponsored research in earthquakes and improved disaster preparations (QuakeStudies). The emphasis on disaster preparation through research and ongoing relief reveals both resilience of the community and an integration of cultural heritage preservation with environmental controls and government. QuakeStudies was created by the University of Canterbury in New Zealand and is part of a larger institutional and collaborative foundation, Ceismic.51

QuakeStories is a component of the website and Ceismic; its contents feature witness and survivor accounts of earthquakes hitting New Zealand between 2010 and 2011. The archive credits the Center for History and New Media’s September 11 Digital Archive for providing the

51 Ceismic is a consortium of several New Zealand cultural heritage institutions supporting the University of Canterbury’s open-access digital archive of materials related to the Christchurch earthquake of 2010 and the aftermath.
model for its collecting efforts and open source technologies. The site’s goals for ensuring the preservation of its content for future audiences and representing a diversity of content and perspective are similar to missions of the U.S. based disaster archives discussed in this chapter.

Figure 7: Screenshot of UC QuakeStudies. The home page reflects the archive’s mission of future disaster preparation through scientific research but the collections include cultural heritage preservation efforts as well as documentation of local experiences of the earthquake-caused devastation.

*QuakeStories* is a separate function of the website, sponsored by the CEISMIC consortium and the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage (“About this site” *QuakeStories*). Each story is featured by an excerpted quote, followed by first name of the author, location, and date story was shared. There is a “read more” link that opens the entire story on a full page with a Google map and location of storyteller. Photographs are arranged as a separate collection with captions provided by the donor. These collections appear to be ordered
randomly, not surprising as the website explains the uploaded stories will be “immediately available for view” (QuakeStories). As a “living memorial,” the site remains open for continuing public reflection and documentation of the earthquake’s effects. From this perspective, memorializing the event is more akin to historic documentation than illustrating grief and rituals of mourning.

The JDArchive: Digital Archive of Japan’s 2011 Disasters also documents the widespread destruction produced by the earthquake and tsunami striking Japan in 2011, but includes more evidence of grief and mourning. Its core mission is to “index, preserve and make widely accessible the digital records of the events of March 2011 and their aftermath; to provide a public space of information sharing, collaboration and conversation for citizens, researchers, students, and policy makers; to serve as a site of shared memory for those most affected by these events and most concerned about their consequences” (JDArchive). The immense amount of crowdsourced material includes websites and social media, culled from the collecting efforts of several Japanese and international institutions and news agencies. The content is similar to what you would find in a web archive, and in fact, Archive-It.Org is also a partner, preserving content from the JDA. Although created and managed by Harvard University’s Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Japan provides the majority of the site’s sponsors and the bulk of the collections are written or described in Japanese. Additionally, while memorials and stories are not as demarcated as in the QuakeStudies and QuakeStories collections, the JAD foregrounds its guide, “How to use the archive” and other links that promote public participation and ease of access to its vast number of collections and items.
Among its most distinguishing features are its affordances for crowdsourcing. In addition to contributing a wide variety of content and perspective, the general public may also translate items from Japanese to English and vice-versa and curate exhibits from the collections. This feature is supported by its digital tool, “Bookmarklet,” and offers the public an opportunity to share meaningful interpretations and commentary on the disasters. In this way, the site visitor may counteract objectifying the other by inserting oneself into the space and dialogue of public mourning. There is, of course, the danger that inserting controversial content could foment retaliatory responses rather than encourage salutary lessons to be learned. Each disaster archive I researched resolved threats of trolling or spamming according to their respective policies and available technical solutions. The JAD requires its contributors to register on the site, thereby eliminating many of these threats to the archive’s mission. Nevertheless, by encouraging public participation the distance between the site visitor and the survivor/witness to the disaster is
reduced. At the same time, this type of shared witnessing to the disaster is not predicated on emotional attachment, but in providing additional information or perspective. I suggest that participating in the online grieving community also makes the contributor accountable to his or her witnessing and is, therefore ethical.

Another distinctive aspect of the JAD collections are the many collections featuring memorials and the ongoing debates for preserving evidence of destruction, as memorials, or removing them for the rebuilding of communities. Belief in the ghosts of victims and the need to revisit sites of destruction and death are frequently depicted in the stories and photographs within the archive. This ongoing dialogue of public mourning and memorializing provides evidence of restorative justice in the sense that all positions must be voiced and considered. The archive/memorial thus exhibits a capacity for generating ethical witnessing and restorative justice. In the following review, selected archive/memorials of terrorist-induced disasters vary in the degree to which they provide venues or resources for working through mourning, and addressing causes for restorative justice.

*Archiving and Memorializing Global and Domestic Acts of Terrorism.*

Before the end of WWII, and as word of the Nazi atrocities reached Palestine, the idea for an archive was being developed that would commemorate the Jews of Europe and document the historic crimes. The *Yad Vashem Archives* officially began collecting documentation and testimonies in 1946 and today, include a number of digital collections and databases that continue to expand. In 1981, the *Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Survivors at Yale University*, was established to preserve video testimonies of Holocaust survivors—a project initiated by Dori Laub, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, and Laurel Vlock, a Jewish
American journalist who aspired to produce a documentary of Holocaust survivors. Archives of the Holocaust have been central to the education and historical documentation of global atrocities of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century, including the genocides of Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. These archive/memorials of holocausts present missions of remembrance through individualizing the losses and personalizing the victims and survivors. They position the viewer/audience as witnesses to the narrator and historic event, thereby establishing a circle of justice in the sense that the witnesses become participants in the healing processes of a group or community while also assuming responsibility for never forgetting the atrocities.

The digital archives of late twentieth and early twenty-first century acts of terrorism are similar to the Holocaust archives in that the oral histories and narratives of survivors and witnesses establish both a living history of and commemoration of the victims. Memory collections converge with rituals of mourning, expressed through the donated artifacts, photographs of shrines, and words of condolence or remembrance. The 1997 Oklahoma City bombing, the Lockerbie Air Disaster in 1988, the 2004 Atocha train station bombings in Madrid, and the 2008 Virginia Tech shootings are three examples of domestic and global terrorist attacks targeting innocent victims and now memorialized physically and digitally which merit examination. The digitized collections and memorial/museums that honor the victims of these respective catastrophes exemplify the convergence of mourning and memory, and the consequential formation of citizen identity.

To begin, on December 21, 1988, Pan American Flight 103 was blown apart mid-air by a terrorist bomb, which killed all 16 crew members and 243 passengers, and another 11 people on the ground in Lockerbie, Scotland. Libya’s Colonel Muammar Gaddafi who later accepted
responsibility and made restitution to the victims’ families through financial compensation instigated the bomb. Two years later, Syracuse University Archives established the Pan Am Flight 103: Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives to commemorate the deaths of 35 Syracuse university students who were studying abroad and traveling home for the holidays. The archives were intended to provide a centralized location for gathering artifacts and memories to remember and pay tribute to the students, and to also facilitate future research. In 2006, the archive increased its collections to include memorials and tributes for all 270 victims of the disaster.

Figure 9: Screenshot of the Pan Am Flight 103/Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives. The collections are primarily arranged by topic, such as “Victims and Families Collections’ and the “Lockerbie Collections.” Although individual tributes may be found in more than one collection, the Victims and Families Collections each feature a scope and content note that typically include a wide variety of media, some of which are digitized.

Through the energetic outreach of the university archivists, families of the victims and officials from Lockerbie and the Syracuse University community collaborated to donate materials and create several collections, unique in item type and purpose. For example, the Pan Am Flight 103 Story Archives Collection contains oral histories from families and friends of the
victims, Lockerbie residents, and first responders from the United Kingdom. Donors retain ownership of their narratives and while many have been published on YouTube, these histories are the intellectual property of both donor and the institution.

The Pan Am/Lockerbie Air Disaster archives are well documented and provide a table of contents (including finding aids, links to related materials in the archives, and notification of whether the collections have been processed or not). The consistency with which the archivists catalog and describe the contents, and the corresponding uniform layout given to each collection illustrates the institutional commitment as well as authority over the mission and contents of these archives. Adhering to archival best practices, including long-term preservation and storage of the materials, and providing worldwide access to the materials, both digitized and unprocessed, are costly endeavors. Thus, the home page solicits “crowd” participation through social media links, featured exhibits and tributes, an interactive timeline of the Lockerbie Air Disaster, and a column of a scrolling list of victims’ names.

A global search is available for keyword searching, enabling me to locate documents and collections related to memorials. In contrast to the temporary shrines commonly associated with widespread disasters, the memorials documented in these archives describe services held in the U.S. and in the U.K. and the creation and dedication of permanent memorials. These memorial collections are divided between the “Syracuse University Memorials” and “Other Memorials” and continue to ingest materials related to anniversaries and current events commemorating the disaster. In addition to the overarching policy to “personalize” the lives lost and provide materials for future research, the Archives include materials relevant to restorative justice, represented not only through legal proceedings and legislative acts, but also through artistic
creations, and family assistance organizations providing emotional support to families victimized by other terrorist acts, including 9/11.

As evidenced in the *Pan Am Flight 103: Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives*, responses to the disaster included the realization that ordinary citizens were vulnerable to acts of terrorism and this realization led to the development of anti-terrorism measures (“Collection Policy” *Pan Am Flight 103/Lockerbie Air Disaster Archives*). Despite overwhelming evidence of domestic violence, acts of terrorism were largely believed to occur outside the United States. On April 19, 1995, domestic terrorists, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. McVeigh detonated a truck of explosives in front of the building, killing 168 people, including children, and causing extensive damage to the building and city block. Just two years prior, the World Trade Center had been bombed, engineered by a group of terrorists associated with Al-Qaeda. It was not surprising that early media coverage of the Murrah building bombing would be linked to Muslim terrorists (“Lessons Learned”).

The fence fronting the building became a temporary shrine in the days following the bombs and functioned as the only memorial until the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial was built and dedicated to the public in 2000. The museum was added the following year, which houses exhibits, educational programs, and the Memorial Archives. The archives have not been digitized and while they are open to researchers, the collections are not accessible through the website, nor do they represent crowdsourced items.
Unlike participatory archives and digital memorials where visitors may contribute content and may also encounter diverse perspectives, the *Oklahoma National Memorial Museum* provides highly scripted narratives that include: mourning the innocents, achieving justice for the innocents, and securing recovery through vigilant anti-terrorism. These narratives support an overarching didactic purpose to strengthen national pride and unity against the mainly outside, destructive forces of terrorism. Told through “the eyes of those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever,” the Memorial Museum creates a trajectory of interactive exhibits, artifacts, photographs, and videos that proceed in order of the day’s events. The museum path is plotted by chapters beginning with the initial chaos of the bombing to the final chapter, “Responsibility and Hope” (“The Memorial Museum”). The website primarily illustrates and briefly describes the main features of the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial and the Memorial
Museum, and regularly adds updates and solicitations for volunteers or donors. Its mission, “to establish a universal symbol that memorializes the victims and survivors, provides a place for contemplative reflection and learning…and a tribute to those who helped” (“History and Mission”), emphasizes commemoration over historical documentation.

While the Oklahoma City Memorial is an expansive and beautiful memorial and tribute to the victims of the bombings, and may be toured virtually, its archives are separated from the memorial and it is not clear whether the contents will ever be digitized and made available to a larger public. Thus, examination of the primary source documents is restricted to disciplinary research, and is separated from the Memorial’s mission to instruct the public and maintain authority over the Memorial’s content. Nevertheless, the website provides a glimpse into the Memorial/Museum’s documentation of the tragedy and positive outcomes, including legislation passed to ensure non-violent responses to terror and ongoing resources for assisting families and survivors of the disaster.

Obviously, other horrific acts of global and domestic terrorism have since occurred, inflicting great physical and psychological damage, generating memorials and cries for justice. The proximity to the September 11, 2001, attacks afforded by real time news coverage and recordings generated from first hand witnesses established a precedent for archiving media from ordinary citizens. The impact of the official and crowdsourced coverage of the 9/11 attacks on the subsequent archives and memorials of 9/11 cannot be overstated and is addressed in the following chapter. Yet, the specter of 9/11 and the disaster archives of this event shadows the disaster archive and memorial of the March 11, 2004, Atocha Train station bombings in Madrid.
Four commuter trains traveling to the Atocha station in Madrid, Spain, were detonated by bombs, planned and executed by an Al Qaeda inspired terrorist cell. Following the immediate chaos and emergency responses to the disaster, crowds gathered in mourning and protest, still unsure of the perpetrators’ identities and alarmed by the terror. As became evident from the police and government investigations, the Al Qaeda group was blamed, yet the makeshift memorials revealed protests against the government as well as against global terrorism, in general. Peter Jan Margery and Cristina Sánchez-Carretero describes these “grassroots memorials” as performances of grief and mourning, with an additional motive to seek change or greater understanding (“Memorializing Traumatic Death” 2007). Signs of political resistance at the makeshift memorials were indicated for example, by a child’s drawing referencing Picasso’s Guernica, satirized images of government or terrorist leaders, and the boldly written words, “Paz” and “¿Porqué?”
As the memorials emerged and expanded throughout the Atocha Train Station, Sánchez-Carretero and other researchers affiliated with the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) contacted the railway and requested the station preserve and store the artifacts as an “Archive of Mourning.” A team of anthropologists, philologists, and librarians examined the artifacts and began systematically cataloging and preserving the items. Although not an actual archive, Sanchez-Carretero explains the artifacts comprise a collection of inter-textual artifacts (messages and symbols inscribed on ephemeral objects such as T-shirts, or painted upon buildings) that function not only as catharsis for the mourners, but as “instruments of social cohesion” (Grassroots Memorials 9-10).

Figure 12: Screenshot of the “Archives del Duelo” (Archives of Mourning)

The “Archives del Duelo” (Archives of Mourning) includes video recordings and oral testimonies in addition to the material artifacts, and they are stored in Spain’s Historical Railway
Archive (Sanchez-Carretero, et. al. “On Blurred Boundaries” 8). The Railway Archive also features a museum and behind the Atocha train station is the Atocha Train Station Memorial, a cylindrical building containing the names of the victims and messages from the memorials. The curators and researchers responsible for creating “Archives del Duelo” intended the collections be made publicly accessible, and believed the Railway Archives and Museum would attract visitors as well as researchers. The team of experts also consulted the American Folklife Center for advice regarding the preservation, cataloging and classification of the various artifacts. Nevertheless, these collections are not available online, which is surprising given the extensive support by the CSIC and the mentorship provided by the American Folklife Center to create digital collections of public responses to disasters.

In another case of domestic terrorism, student Seung-Hui Cho gunned down 32 people and injured another 17 before committing suicide on April 16, 2007. The dead and injured were students and faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University where Cho had been a senior. Mourning for the victims of this massive tragedy was documented by several organizations within the university, but the April 16th Archive, an Omeka-based disaster archive, emerged as a primary “memory bank” in the months and year following the shootings (Jesiek and Hunsinger “The April 16th Archive: Collecting and Preserving Memories of the Virginia Tech Tragedy”). The website provided the VT community a centralized space and initiative for gathering and preserving shared memories and various artifacts documenting the tragedy and its memorials.
Figure 13: A screenshot of the original April 16th Archive crawled by Virginia Tech’s Tragedy and Recovery Network and Archive-It.org. The interface layout is based on the Omeka platform, but very little metadata was collected for each item and the archive became inactive a year following its inception.

By 2009 the promise of this “pragmatic and outwardly social archive” as foreseen by its creators Brent Jesiek and Jeremy Hunsinger was superseded by other departments within Virginia Polytechnic. Items were no longer being added to the archive, although the website was last updated in 2011 and continues to function by providing access to its contents. The ongoing work of mourning, remembrance, and preserving the historical record of the Virginia Tech Massacre now resides in separate but connected departments at Virginia Tech. The Digital Library and Archives manages the vast amount of ephemera and condolence mail submitted to the university following the shootings, and has digitized a small portion of its collection. Unlike the limited metadata included in the April 16th Archive, the special collection, “The April 16, 2007 Condolence Archive,” provides full item metadata for each of the items and includes the finding aid and access restrictions for on-site use. The digitization and online exhibition of the
condolence artifacts were selected by the archive staff as a single collection housed within the University’s Archives. The university also retains the copyright for both digital and physical items, which is in sharp contrast to other disaster collections including the LC’s “September 11 Documentary Project.” Virginia Tech’s department, “Office of Recovery and Support” hosted the first memorial website, April 16 Memorial Website, which featured letters, poems, and other brief texts expressing condolences to the VT community. These brief texts were written within the first week of the shootings and reveal raw emotion. The department also hosts the memorial “We Remember” that functions as a cybermemorial to each victim and a collection of news stories about the event. Remarkably, there is no evidence of participation by students or the public in the construction of these collections and tributes.

Despite The April 16th Archive’s current inactivity and the poorly executed design of the items and their metadata (e.g., “Rights” disclaimer appears in the description field when the item lacks this information, needlessly filling the page), the documents and images altogether reveal a more diverse and emotionally tinged representation of mourning and remembrance than those of the University Archives and Memorial. Had there been evidence of greater collaboration between the staff and visionaries of the April 16th Archive, and other departments within the university, perhaps those items representing social issues of justice and law (including the argument for greater gun control), would have integrated in or linked to the other VT departments and special collections (Purcell “More than flowers”).
Key Findings

From my personal account of cybermourning and my inspection of cybermemorials in general, I discovered fundamental differences between them and archive/memorials of disasters. Digitization and the social media aspects of cybermemorials altogether transform private memorials into public mourning spaces. Conversely, the public disaster archives help the general public realize catastrophic losses occur at the individual, personal level. Another key distinction is the relatively closed policy prohibiting the public to comment, tag, or edit content in the disaster archive/memorials in contrast to the freedom that many cybermemorials provide the public-at-large to add comments and posts to the deceased or to the bereaved. The latter form of contribution resembles a more casual, intimate conversation that takes on a particular poignancy when the individual being mourned is a victim of a catastrophic event. Memorial sites for groups, such as Cantor Fitzgerald, recreate mourning rituals where the public may pay their respects. Conversely, when the public has limited interaction with the items in a disaster archive/memorial, their position is more of a witness and audience than mourner.

From my review of the mission statements, interface design and functionality, and the extent of public participation in each archive, I developed a basic framework of analysis. The left column represents broad dimensions common to digital memorial archives and the right column provides directions for interrogating each dimension. The procedure for abstracting dimensions from both verbal content and imagery was based on content analysis—selecting terms or phrases and recurring figures or symbols to which I assigned codes. These codes were later grouped into categories, which were later sub-divided, or regrouped as I continued analyzing more samples. What emerged from these coded repetitions or series of elements were patterns of behavior and
material qualities. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, the dimensions continued to be refined as I analyzed the archives and memorials of 9/11 and the Boston Marathon Bombings.

Table 1: Framework of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission or Purpose</th>
<th>Assess site’s purpose by examining the mission statement or “About” page. Questions to help categorize the mission statement include, “Is the archive/memorial largely commemorative and celebratory, oriented towards current and future research, or a merger of the two general types?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Technical Infrastructure</td>
<td>Assess the social and technical infrastructures of the archive/memorial and ask, “Did the site employ socio-technical features to create and sustain a community of mourners?” These features would include linking to social media platforms, affording space and the technical means for uploading a variety of media, and outreach and face-to-face networking to build trust within the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Assess the extent and quality of public participation in the archive/memorial. Determine whether there is evidence of negotiation between contributors of content and site managers and sponsors regarding copyright and ownership. How are privacy rights being handled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity</td>
<td>Assess the formation of civic, national, or other group identities as guided by the archive/memorial policies. Whose cultural heritage is being preserved? Do the collections and tags reveal a diverse community? Is there evidence of social, ethnic, religious, etc. groups affirming their respective identities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and Recovery</td>
<td>Assess the work of mourning and recovery, determining whether the archive/memorial sponsors and outreach facilitate recovery and preparation for future disasters. Is there from the archive that demonstrates a unified community or attempts being made to solidify membership within that community? How does the archive project into the future? Is there any evidence of disaster preparation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key themes that emerged from analyzing the contents and grouping them into these broad dimensions include:

- The archive is conceived for healing and strengthening the community. There is evidence in the mission statements and by the integration of mental health resources with civic, governmental, and cultural heritage organizations that trauma is part of our social and economic economy. The disaster archive/memorial contributors implement a moral duty to their respective
communities by sharing memories of pain and survival that benefit others as well as the self.

- The archive serves to commemorate and memorialize both individual and collective losses and sacrifices. The online archive/memorial combines honoring individual victims of a disaster with collections of remembrances and artifacts to preserve the memories of that event.

- The archive provides historical documentation and long-term preservation, and generally produces minimal metadata—a result of various contingencies including the public needs, interests, time, funding, and collaboration between multiple organizations within the community.

**Summary**

I introduced this chapter with a quote by Derrida eulogizing the death of his friend, Roland Barthes. He questioned the legitimacy of speaking of and for the dead—of attempting to single out all that was exceptional or unique in the friendship, or to honor a friend by anticipating what he might say. Derrida’s questions reminded me of cybermemorials, of dialogic spaces between the deceased and the mourners. I observed from my visits to cybermemorials including those of my friend, Jan, that dialogues with and about the deceased appeared to have benefits, including mourning-at-your-own-pace and keeping the memories alive. Yet I also felt these dialogic spaces primarily served the social network, and that the deceased was volleyed about like a virtual ping pong ball, circulated through carefully selected images and memories at the whim of the contributor, usually benign but potentially hurtful.
Since 2002, the proliferation of digital archives of disaster demonstrates convergences of archiving and memorializing with civics-oriented social networking. In response to catastrophic events affecting entire communities, I observed that digital archive/memorials create or adapt innovative archival policies that anticipate future needs of communities in crisis, such as establishing neighborhood-based story gathering centers, collecting artifacts from temporary shrines, and preserving the artifacts and shared memories (Brennan; Recuber). By examining archival policies for establishing grief collections, I am also observing a process for establishing group identity.

Collective, online mourning creates virtual networks with the possibility for redefining the social self, (as witness or as contributor to the archive and virtual community). The dimensions of healing and mourning were naturally quite evident in the items and collections, if not in the mission statement or infrastructure of the disaster archives that I reviewed. These archive/memorial establish an imagined community of mourners, but they also reflect various group affiliations. From self-reported statements indicating identification with a particular group (witness, survivor, local resident, archival expert, etc.), I observed the reintegration of self to society in the aftermath of a collectively mourned tragedy.

Despite there being many individual items that depicted a trajectory from trauma to recovery, neither the collections nor database fields provide the site visitor a simple path for navigating through the shock, grief, mourning, and recovery from the disasters, with the exception of the curating tool, Bookmarklet, provided by the Japanese Digital Archive. The typical lack of a recognizable narrative or sequence of items is to be expected given its database logic (Manovich, Recuber) and the polyglot of artifacts and memories collected. Yet, recalling
the day’s events and reflecting how one’s life has changed since the attacks, are cognitively complex tasks, generating understanding and facilitating recovery from the traumatic event. *UC QuakeStories* offers a solution to the archivist/curator’s dilemma of whether to create an overarching narrative of the disaster and its recovery or leave the discovery of such narratives to chance.

In the next chapter, I apply the framework developed from my review of the cybermemorials and disaster archives to three archive/memorials that represent September 11: the *September 11 Digital Archive*, the Library of Congress “September 11 Documentary Project,” and the *National September 11 Memorial/Museum*. I discuss my data and insights gleaned from my ethnographic research that included site visits and interviews. Additionally, I conduct content analyses of the mission statements and selected oral histories and photographs taken of ad hoc memorials and temporary shrines. While September 11, 2001, provides the common thread relating these three archives, they present alternative approaches to selecting, describing, and crowdsourcing materials and constructing grief collections.
“Memories can cohere around objects in unpredictable ways, and the task of the archivist of emotion is thus an unusual one.”

Ann Cvetovich, An Archive of Feelings

In the previous chapter, I reviewed a selection of disaster archives representing the collective memories of traumatic events caused by natural and man-made forces. From that review, I developed a framework of analysis for investigating three functions of disaster archiving: to heal and strengthen the community; to commemorate and memorialize the losses; and to provide long-term preservation of the public’s responses to that event. How does one contain and ingest a community-wide, catastrophic event when one’s own life has been upended by the crisis? The task of creating and preserving “grief collections,” while rarely solitary, is nevertheless an emotionally challenging responsibility.

To acquire a better feel for the social and physical milieu in which these functions occurred, and determine how collections of emotionally-laden memories were sifted and sorted, I interviewed archivists and curators in June, 2014, at the American Folklife Center (AFC at the Library of Congress), the National September 11 Memorial Museum (NYC) and also examined the September 11 Digital Archive, one of the first attempts to create an archive of born digital artifacts generated and distributed by the general public. Those responsible for creating, managing, and sustaining these digital collections—experts in their respective disciplines as
archivists, curators, and digital humanities scholars—were also intimately connected with the traumatized community they were documenting. They are professionals who contributed to the healing of their respective communities by constructing meaningful objects and centralized locations where the community could gather.

In addition to conducting interviews and observations, I analyzed the contents of the respective mission statements and selected stories and photographs of temporary shrines and memorials. In this chapter, I present my examination of three archives and memorials of the September 11, 2001 attacks. The first section examines the September 11 Digital Archive, which addresses the mission statement and selected contents, functionality of the site, and extent of participation. The sections that follow include my interviews with the archivists and curators of the “September 11 Documentary Project” (AFC) and the September 11 National Memorial/Museum. Their archival curation stories clarify, I argue, the collaborative yet highly personal nature of processing suffering and grief in a digital medium as well as the political, legal, and ethical challenges one faces when attempting to represent diverse expressions of national mourning within the constraints of existing technology and to ensure its long-term integrity, preservation, and access.

The September 11 Digital Archive

The 9/11 attacks catapulted historians and archivists into providing spaces for recording the memories by and for the general public—evidence of a paradigm shift in archival policies that acknowledged the therapeutic benefits of telling stories and sharing memories. The nascent digital, networked culture of 2001 provided an expansive space for collecting memories of the 9/11 attacks and prompted the development of digital platforms and policies to both contain the
profusion of memories and provide witnessing to what was an unfathomable and overwhelming attack.

In the weeks following the September 11 attacks, 2001, efforts by archive collecting institutions, including the Library of Congress, the Internet Archive, and the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) began amassing born digital content and television news broadcasts for their permanent collections. The Library of Congress (LC) and Internet Archive’s (IA) website and news media collections were created and curated by archivists, which spanned less than a year in order to preserve the digital responses by a nation still in shock and mourning. The CHNM adopted a less archival and more socio-historical perspective for their project. They collaborated with the American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning (City University of New York) to solicit and ingest thousands of first-hand accounts in a variety of formats. Although Internet users and participants in Web 2.0 platforms (e.g. blogs and email) represented less than half of the American public in 2001, the concerted efforts of these institutions plus the funding provided by the Alfred Sloan Foundation enabled them to acquire thousands of digital artifacts. Sheila Brennan explains that additional collaboration with community organizations were made to facilitate greater public participation in the development of the September 11 Digital Archive’s collections. “…The Archive was open to anyone with an internet connection, and in turn, those collected stories, photos, videos, art works, sounds, were available for anyone with web access to browse” (“Legacy”).

The September 11 Digital Archive (911DA) was conceived to provide both historians and the public an ongoing and interactive platform of 9/11 histories. The original site began collecting items shortly after the 9/11 attacks and in 2003 the Library of Congress ingested the
digital archive and its collections. A year later, the archive discontinued active collecting, but in 2014, the collections were migrated to an updated Omeka platform, enabling access to many items that were previously inaccessible or difficult to locate. The current site continues the original archive’s mission to “use electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the history of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania and the public responses to them.” (“About”). The first mission statement described its main features (collections, annotations, educational materials, and “free” software tools) as an innovative method for studying history. The current version, however, emphasizes long-term preservation—“a permanent record”—and, thus, rationalizes the migration of the archive into Omeka.

Figure 14: Screenshot of the September 11 Digital Archive in its current Omeka platform.

Rather than function as a memorial, the site presents its items and collections as primary source documents, organized and presented through open-source metadata and XML formatting.
The metadata is generally sparse, the pages plain and bereft of color and variety, and there is a noticeable absence of social media applications, unlike other Omeka-based disaster archives, which feature social media applications and interactive features, including maps and timelines that engage a broad public.

Except for the ongoing addition of individual and organizational contributions, and a simplification of the visual display of collections and the menu bar, *The September 11 Digital Archive* of 2011 functions much as it did in 2002-2014. The iconic image of the skeletal remains of the WTC tower remains on the masthead behind the blue letters shadowed in red, while the featured images and collections appear below. The current version’s home page reflects the pictorial shift for articulating and disseminating information evident in the versions transitioning from the late 20th to early 21st century. In this sense, the design is homologous with the archive’s mission to represent the diversity of media and opinion that chronicled 9/11 and its immediate impact on society. Images dominate the page but the rotating gallery is highly selective. In the example given in figure 3, the first image on the far left presents a distanced perspective, establishing the scene of destruction as might be captured from military, government, or corporate headquarters—far removed from the street level chaos. The middle image presents a call for patriotism—sufficiently open-ended for multiple expressions of national unity including flag waving and revenge politics. And, the third image featured conveys the profound tragedy of 9/11 through the horror and sacrifice of people trapped in the towers.

The home page lists three primary functions of the site: browse, research, and contribute. It is ironic that the images, which exude rhetorical power, are given perfunctory metadata and interpretation and that one of the site’s functions, “browse,” implies casual looking. Each
function is linked to the database or contributor page, enabling a skilled user to modify the search parameters facilitated by the extended Dublin Core metadata and XML formatting.

In the original version, the interfaces for browsing and contributing content are heavily text-based but limited. The pre-Omeka “browse” function featured items arranged hierarchically by media type followed by description or title. The items were then arranged in a grid, similar to the layout used for digital collections in the Library of Congress. To access items through their collections or by keyword the user had to select the “Research” function.

In the current version, site users browse contents either by selecting items or collections. Their searches are refined by selecting specific fields that comprise Dublin Core metadata elements (e.g., media type, abstract, creation date), or by any combination of collection, media type, and tags. Users may also select items that are featured or not featured on the website. The featured items and collections represent a small sampling of the contents and provide a less intimidating interface for becoming acquainted with the site. In sum, the current browse functions are designed explicitly for both the casual user and serious researcher and an FAQ section provides limited historical context and recommended resources for studying 9/11.

Notwithstanding the simplified interface and greater use of images on the home page, the site limits the range of participation to accessing the database or contributing content. The minimal curation given per item may be a detriment for casual users seeking historical context, but the breadth and variety of perspectives represented in the archive’s non-hierarchical arrangement of collections is appropriate for digital history collecting. For example, the “Organization” collections include documents from various agencies, individual employee
contributions, and satirical websites, both supportive and mocking of the U.S. The odd juxtaposition of these items invite accidental discoveries that richly augment 9/11’s cultural context. As opposed to the overarching narratives of American innocence and the rhetoric that military intervention was the optimal and only solution to a new war on terror, the narratives in the 9/11 Digital Archive are more diverse and are drawn from an array of published and private documents. Yet, no other digital tools or educational activities are offered that would elicit greater engagement with the items or enhance comprehension, with the exception of the FAQs. As an archive dedicated to preserving and making accessible the 69,046 items that represent both individual and large group contributions, 9/11DA is highly successful. Its mission to “help historians and archivists improve their practices” renders this archive more of a sandbox for digital history making than as an archive/memorial for collective mourning and remembrances.

Nevertheless, the user contribution function is designed for clarity of expression and standardization. The preponderance of text over image that once dominated the templates designed for user contribution has been replaced with spacious layouts and text boxes. In the first decade of 9/11DA’s operation, the contribution page provided three means for sharing items: “Type your story,” “Cut and paste your email,” and “Upload images, documents, and files” (“National September 11 Memorial Museum Web Archive” National September 11 Memorial Museum Collection). Like personal memorial sites and the Cantor Fitzgerald site, contribution pages now feature templates designed for the unique features and rhetorical purposes of the specific item. “Type your story” has been replaced with the command, “Contribute a Story” and the template provides space for a title, and questions including, “How has your life changed because of what happened on September 11, 2001” and “How did you hear about this website?”
Guiding and instructing participants is also practiced by cybermemorials, such as providing prompts, “add a tribute of your own,” (Cantor Fitzgerald), “add a memory or condolence” (Legacy.com), and spaces for uploading photos, videos, etc. This type of prompting, however, does not typically produce historical reflection as much as it provides a means for mourning.

Asking how life has changed since the disaster is rhetorically powerful and commonly used in other archive/memorials. For example, by narrating a story that situates 9/11 as a radical break with the past, the contributor adds supportive testimony to the idea that political and cultural ways of life after 9/11 are somehow attributable to the nation being attacked. The question assumes this event surpasses previous phenomena in the most significant ways and therefore frames this memory and others to follow. The site also inquires how the contributors learned of the website, which conveys the importance of surveying Internet usage and understanding what motivates people to interact with the site. Although this question may not have been based on a business model, it nevertheless supports the type of marketing and outreach services that both for-profit and non-profit content management systems use to generate support and competition for business. The question is also relevant for examining the interviewee’s proximity to the disaster and what possible effects on the person’s psyche may be attributed to witnessing the event through certain technologies—certainly risk factors for developing PTSD and contributing to a traumatized community (Busso, et. al., McFarlane, et. al.)

Both types of questions illuminate the effects of digitization of human communication and expression on collective memory. Digitization of media and communications afford the rapid capture and dissemination of information that can be relayed relatively cheaply and easily. The ubiquitous digital recording and storing devices generate greater amounts of data and
consequently, increase dependency on greater capacities of digital storage. With digital storage declining in cost as capacity grows, the appeal to record and save everything by everyone is not so far-fetched. Citizen journalism and participation in digital communications by large populations inevitably threaten the hegemony of broadcast, corporate media.

Curation in the earlier version consists primarily of brief descriptions at the collection level. In contrast, the current version includes description at the item level, afforded by the Dublin Core metadata and information provided by the donor. Numbers and item type substitute as titles—mechanical yet ethical in the sense that the donor’s preferences for description and representation were honored. The archive’s staff curated the items and collections, in both the original and current versions. The evidence and extent of crowdsourcing is implied by the outreach that was originally conducted in local communities and through collaboration with multiple local civic and national organizations. Despite the updated platform and added content, 911DA does not include Web 2.0 features, such as social network site links or comment and tag options. The site ranks low in participation due to its Web “1.5” status, as Sheila Brennan once described another early Omeka website, *The Hurricane Memory Bank* (“Why Collecting History” is Web 1.5”). Notwithstanding the absence of social networking, both in content and in function, 911DA supports ongoing contributions for continued research.

My field research, as an extension of my analysis of the 9/11 sites, is an attempt to better understand the principles and practices of disaster archive creation, management, and preservation. In what follows, I explain research methodology and findings for each site visit and how they cumulatively informed my understanding of disaster archiving concerning 9/11 and related events.
Inside the American Folklife Center: “The September 11 Documentary Project”

The American Folklife Center is located in the Thomas Jefferson Building, oldest and grandest of the three buildings that comprise the Library of Congress. Downstairs, beyond the gift shop and along a corridor of office suites that include the Veteran’s Oral History Project, I located the AFC by its unobtrusive sign. The door was slightly ajar and I walked into the small lobby and approached the circulation desk where the staff rotates duties to serve the general public and researchers. Ann was on “desk duty” the morning I arrived but pulled a chair beside her and invited me to sit at this desk for much of the interview. Prior to this meeting, I sent her questions to provide her time for preparation, such as “Did you then, or have you recently, considered how the LOC 9/11 collections contribute to a nation’s identity, healing from trauma, and mourning the losses from the tragic event?” Those questions were not addressed as formally phrased, nor immediately posed but rather, followed a trajectory of Ann’s memories and the occasional interruption of a fellow staff member eager to eavesdrop and offer opinions.
The beginning of our interview focused on the origins of the “September 11 Documentary Project” and the policy decisions involved in creating a collection of American responses to 9/11. The project’s purpose at the outset represented the perspective of the American Folklife Center, consonant with the missions and methods of other oral history collections, including the man-on-the-street Pearl Harbor recordings and the Vietnam Veteran’s Oral History Project. Recording and preserving the public memories of and responses to a national disaster were tasks both familiar and requisite to the AFC, yet decisions for ingesting, describing, containing, and presenting items that generated and regenerated emotions would lead to establishing new precedents for archiving a traumatic event of national consequence. The precedents established by both of these disaster archives include websites and policies designed to foster public participation in collectively remembering and commemorating a widespread catastrophe.
As narrated in the introductory chapter, AFC folklorist and curator Ann Hoog generated the “Call for Participation” to local folklore and historical societies immediately after the 9/11 attacks, expecting to generate a cross-section of American responses in audio format, similar to the man-on-the-street interviews that Alan Lomax gathered following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Unexpectedly, she received digital artifacts including emails and images of websites, requiring her to expand her collections and create finding aids for items laden with emotion and representative of the public’s need to respond. Although the Library of Congress initiated a collection of web-based content on the day of and a few months following the September 11 attacks, its web archive was a separate project from the Folklore division’s documentary project. The project spanned less than a year, from September 2001, to early 2002, according to its mission to preserve the diversity of opinion and immediacy of eyewitness accounts and opinions (“About”).

Ann explained that her methods of submitting calls for participation were based partly on traditional finding aids and classification in the Folklife Center, and partly on her own assessment of the items. She was afforded extended time to immerse herself into the recordings, documents, and images of the public reactions to 9/11 during the Anthrax scare, a source of much anxiety due to the limited time for collecting and the intense focus she gave to each item. In retrospect, Ann admitted the slowdown of receiving public contributions helped her refine her categories and finding aids. Fellow staff members and employees of other departments within the Library of Congress also shared photographs and stories, that while not necessary for “seeding” the project, allowed fellow staff to participate in what was increasingly evident, a widespread mourning and need to “act.”
Although her friends and associates shared their 9/11 stories, she could not reciprocate as she was too emotionally spent at the end of each day. After reflecting on the similarities between her story and those collected (E.g., the glorious weather that morning along the East Coast, learning of the disaster through television news broadcasts, shocked silence, and fear at the sound of Air Force and Navy jets scrambling), we discussed the technical features of the collections and the affordances and challenges the dawning digital age produced.

Ann explained, in contrast to the brief oral interviews of 1941, some of the 9/11 oral interviews spanned an hour or more and the recordings included texts, videos, photographs, and other types of documents and artifacts. From Knoxville, Tennessee, she received both artifacts and documentation of a temporary memorial donated by the Knoxville Writer’s Guild. Their donations are grouped by item type, separated by manuscript materials and artifacts. Ann explained that this decision was based on the LC’s archival policies but that she and her staff assigned descriptions of the items and collections.

Ann pointed out that the collections are organized in accordance with archival principles such as provenance and fonds. From the original donor, subsets were created by item type and assigned folder numbers. The AFC depends on limited crowdsourcing through families of the donors (identifying names, providing context, etc.), volunteers who translate or provide specialized skills, and interns. Because of budget cuts, their staff is smaller than during the first year of collecting; yet the collection continues to improve through these contextual additions and digitization.
The “Call for Participation” was set up as a listserve that resulted in the volume and variety of artifacts. The 9/11 Documentary Project contains thousands of manuscripts and hundreds of audio and video interviews and graphic materials, of which a small percentage has been digitized and made accessible to the public. Most of the digitized items are audio recordings (168), followed by images (74), video (28), text (23), and web pages (3). Except for the web pages, the original formats were analog and many items were destroyed by irradiation following the Anthrax scare. Other divisions of the Library of Congress also received documents and artifacts, including newspapers, photographs and artwork, and aerial imagery of Ground Zero. The divisions, American Folklife Center (AFC), Geography and Maps, Prints and Photographs, and various Overseas offices contributed items for the Library’s exhibit, “Witness and Response: September 11 Acquisitions at the Library of Congress.” The exhibit ran from September 7 to October 26, 2002, and like the “September 11 Documentary Project,” provided the public reassurance that the historical record would be preserved and made accessible for future generations.

I asked Ann to describe her most significant and most unexpected findings. These included the public’s “need to blame someone” and the fear that “they” would become a target. Cities far removed from New York or Washington, D.C. feared their bridges, populous areas, and state or county capitals would be attacked. There was a “palpable fear in the air.” She also reported being struck by the differences in responses depending on where and when one first heard of the attacks. Unlike the East Coast residents who were already busy about their day and who were mostly surrounded by people they worked with, people in the mid-west or west coast were awakened with the news and found it disorienting and unbelievable.
Perhaps the most significant research question for Ann was how people got their information. (What media was used and why?) Ann explained that the information was “overwhelmingly visual” and the volume of visual content archived by the LC’s web archive, Archive-it.org, and the September 11 Digital Archive support this assessment. Nevertheless, Ann’s preference for oral histories is made evident in her explication of the narrative arcs characteristic of so many of these stories. She defined the arc that begins with descriptions of the weather or morning activities. From this beginning the story rises to discovery and subsequent feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, and fear. Awareness and reflection follows, expressed as sorrow for victims and families, anger, and then culminating with circumspection and possible government responses or future scenarios. Ann believed this arc was nearly universal from the stories she listened to and catalogued.

It is evident that the participatory effect of digital media or the “prosumer” logic of digitally active citizens had not yet become an established feature of cultural heritage institutions prior to 9/11. During the brief time given for collecting and ingesting content into the Documentary Project, the public participated in the archive’s construction, albeit with limited agency. Donating content and providing permission to publicly display that content is a limited form of crowdsourcing. The AFC staff selected content that would be representative of a diverse public and constructed the classifications, metadata, and coding. Their expertise and professional interest in cultural and regional differences is evident in an excerpt from the About page, “The voices of men and women from many cultural, occupational, and ethnic backgrounds are represented…the majority of the interviews are from other parts of the U.S.—from those who
first heard the news on television or radio, and from teacher, friends, family, and other members of their communities” (“About this Collection” September 11 Documentary Project).

Among the items non-digitized (that far outnumbered the website’s collections), are the more graphic witness reports and the odd assortments of materials from local historical societies. For example, the Knoxville Writer’s Guild, of Tennessee, sent manuscripts (text items), children’s drawings, and assorted material artifacts gathered from a spontaneous shrine titled, “The Wall of Unity.” I was impressed by the Guild’s careful selection of items representative of their community’s mourning and remembrance of the 9/11 attacks.

Figure 16: Photograph of a sampling of copper plates with inscribed messages appealing for peace or seeking answers. These items were featured at Knoxville, Tennessee’s “Wall of Unity” shortly following the 9/11 attacks, archived as part of the “September 11 Documentary Project.” They have not been digitized.
Ann confirmed my belief that not digitizing the more graphic and tearful oral testimonies was based on the staff’s moral sensibilities and desire to avoid any possible retraumatization that might result from listening to and accessing disturbing stories and imagery. Another reason given for not digitizing the entire collection was more pragmatic. Following the institution’s exhibit in 2002, staff and funding decreased. The AFC used its interns to occasionally add metadata to the collections, while other projects received greater support, including the Veteran’s Oral History Project. There was also an air of uncertainty surrounding the future of these items. Would future technologies someday unlock the memories stored in irradiated tapes, or would new evidence be discovered that would impart greater understanding, and hence, more useful interpretations?

Figure 17: Photograph taken at the AFC of an irradiated tape, destroyed by procedures to eliminate possible Anthrax poisoning. The oral histories recorded in this tape were never heard but its preservation serves as historical documentation.
Nevertheless, the “September 11 Documentary Project” provided a model for responding to national crises by cultural heritage organizations. Ann and her staff were contacted after the 2004 Madrid train bombings and provided the CSIC guidance for cataloging and classifying artifacts from the grassroots memorials that were created by the public in mourning (Carretero, et. al. “On Blurred Boundaries”). Following my site visit, I reviewed the “September 11 Documentary Project’s” website layout, mission statement (About this collection), and randomly selected items. An overview of my content (discourse) analysis of the site’s mission statement and sampling of contents follows. On the home page of the “September 11 Documentary Project,” there are two tabs featured: “About this collection” and “Collection items.” This page clearly delineates the functions of its tabs, links, and assumed audiences.

By selecting “About this collection” the user is presented with a gallery of 13 images that sample the collection, illustrating the diversity of medium, source, and range of perspectives. Most of the featured items are images, either drawings by children or photographs taken of objects placed at spontaneous shrines. The children’s drawings were submitted as part of an elementary school class project, obviously referencing patriotism and the opportunity to couple national identity formation with mourning. The innocence metaphorically repeats the innocence of the nation. The photographs of spontaneous shrines and one of a church in Georgia document both public and private mourning. The messages attached to these photographs resonate with emotion and rhetorical power.

One of the images taken at the Pentagon’s temporary shrine is a close-up of a Columbian flag with an attached, smaller American flag and hand-written messages. This image also combines patriotism with mourning, but with the unspoken plea to respect and not fear the
nation’s ethnic diversity. The photograph’s imagery and messages assert the creator’s ability to merge dual-citizenship with allegiance to and empathy for America and its citizens.

Figure 18: James Hardin photograph, “Memorial at the Pentagon-Flag 1, taken of a spontaneous shrine at the Pentagon in September, 2001.

In contrast to this message, the outdoor church sign from Cobb County, Georgia, ironically challenges the fundamentalist, religious truth claim, “God is on our side.” The text inside the photograph adds an additional layer of meaning to an already remediated memorial. The photographer of this church sign was also an employee of the Library of Congress Folklife Center and it could be assumed that the image was selected for its metaphoric qualities. I imagined the sign was designed without irony and was not intended to spark debate regarding how one was to determine “God’s side,” or whether one could do so without depending on religious dogma. The first sentence posits a maxim, “Anybody can say ‘God is on my side’ * Even terrorists.” Undermining this truism and thereby creating the paradox, is the last sentence, “It is far superior to be on God’s side.” Whereas the first sentence opens the field for discussion, the second closes it with a claim of morality. The U.S. official statements regarding 9/11 and the plans for vengeance were couched in similar moral claims.

Although this is only one photograph, there are thousands of similar images and narratives that counter the statements emerging from the White House and U.S. Congress in the aftermath of 9/11. Such statements including President Bush’s proclamation of the “war on terror,” and “either you are with us or with the terrorists,” characterized official sentiment, yet there were few, if any, statements acknowledging the number of U.S. citizens experiencing fear, anxiety, and various symptoms of PTSD following the 9/11 attacks. Perhaps the greatest indicators of Americans experiencing acute stress are provided in the oral narratives gathered by the September 11 Digital Archive and the Library of Congress “September 11 Documentary Project.”
Although sound recordings form the bulk of the documentary project collections, only a small sampling of sound recordings derived from California, Virginia, and New York are presented as part of the home page gallery. These recordings convey similar emotions of shock, sadness, and fear, and also reconstructions of the day’s events. Eyewitness and overseas accounts by schoolchildren or first responders are accorded similar metadata and placed in common collections by type, location, date, or theme. Featured below the gallery is a narrative of the project’s purpose and general contents positioned between a menu of resources for teachers and “experts” on the left margin, and an image of a spontaneous shrine to one of the flight attendants who perished in the 9/11 Pentagon attack on the right margin.

Despite the diverse representation of geographical and demographic origins, the contents and narrative arcs in the images and audio recordings I reviewed were similar in tone and indicated the initial effects of trauma. For example, a woman from the Midwest recalls first hearing of the 9/11 attacks upon awakening from her radio, and later viewed the event from the television in her kitchen. She spent the rest of the day meticulously cleaning and organizing her home to such a degree that she was surprised by the hours that passed and by the soiled condition of her clothing (“Interview with Janet Freeman” “September 11 Documentary Project”). Her narrative depicted the delayed cognitive awareness of the trauma she experienced while immersed in her cleaning and watching the television. Others convey “shock,” “sadness,” and “disbelief” before taking action or making sense of the attacks.

Another interesting observation: these witnesses also reported watching the TV news and being drawn to the repeated images of the burning towers and their eventual collapse. Was the repetition of viewing along with the repetition of broadcasting evidence of both individuals and
community experiencing PTSD? Like the first-hand witnesses to the attacks on and collapse of the Twin Towers, I wanted to view the repetition of the iconic imagery as if at some point, it would make sense or I would get relief. Like the moth drawn to fire, relief from the constant sense of apprehension and sorrow was momentarily granted by staring mutely at the repeating videos and photographs. But, was this fixation cathartic? At some point, I no longer needed to stare at the images and the broadcast news gradually (?) stopped their continuous feed of the burning, collapsing towers. Was it because the replay stopped that I also stopped viewing? Or, did I, at an unconscious level, reach some understanding or acceptance of the event? Was it now historic and had I processed the memory?

That most narratives included a summary or self-reflection, similar to Janet’s interview, may have been a result of the flexible time given for the interviewee and perhaps, by the questions posed. The interviewers’ questions are provided in the unpublished collections, but their voices are not included in the recordings, providing the listener a greater sense of immediacy with the content, but also a sense that the interviewee is freely speaking his or her mind. There were many accounts by survivors or first-hand witnesses to the attacks, although most were derived far from New York or Washington, D.C., facilitating the man-on-the-street ethos, commensurate with the philosophy of the Library of Congress. Notwithstanding the transparency of method provided by the metadata, the AFC’s selection process is hidden from public view, emerging from the tacit knowledge and subjective experiences of the staff.

Since 9/11, the public is more experienced with creating and preserving digital content. Many cultural heritage institutions including the National Archives and the New York Public Library solicit their user/contributors to augment or correct metadata—a type of crowdsourcing
that provides users the templates and language necessary for greater participation. Permitting users to add comments or tags to previously uploaded content, largely indifferent to uniform standards, is a type of crowdsourcing more common to social media platforms. This folksonomy (ad-hoc classifications or user-created tags) is part of the participatory logic now emerging in some archives and museums, but has been only marginally adopted by disaster archive/memorials. The socio-technical explosion of commenting, tagging, and sharing various objects and narratives of one’s experience with catastrophic events are incorporated into the collections of several disaster archives created after the “September 11 Documentary Project” (e.g., JAD, QuakeStudies, Our Marathon). As will be discussed in my review of Our Marathon, a greater emphasis on the public’s interactivity with the content, if not partnership with creating policies, is indicated by the presence of dynamic, innovative tools capable of bringing out multiple dimensions of an item.

The LC’s institutional control over the content classifications provides permanent, public access (open standards of coding and policies for migration across multiple platforms) and is founded in the underlying principles of traditional, historical archives. Like The September 11 Digital Archive, the documentary project purports to establish an historical record of the event through the unscripted responses of the public. Although the privacy of the donors and the ownership of their contributions are protected under copyright the donors lack control over how their items are represented and accessed. The functionality of the “September 11 Documentary Project”—its ability to reference and access items as any other object in the Library’s vast holdings—is what integrates it into the collective history and memory of the United States. It is a construction of national, subject identity that emerges from the carefully selected items that
approximate the geographical, ethnic, socio-economic, racial, and religious diversity of the United States. Although the public may freely access the contents and view the historical and demographic context from the published metadata, there are no other means for adding content to this collection. Participation is augmented by providing tools for interpretation, such as using the LC’s primary source document guides and lesson plans, or submitting commentary to a number of LC blogs.

Users are advised to adhere to copyright restrictions while the subject headings and genres provide limited interpretation. The visible cataloging and documentation of each item are presented as primary sources, unique artifacts of history and mourning, that require pedagogical or curatorial invention if these artifacts are to function as a memorial. In other words, without the narrative of an exhibit, the narrative arcs that Ann discovered after listening to hundreds of hours of audio-recorded interviews are hidden from the site’s interface. The infrastructure and purpose correspond to an ostensibly neutral and culturally inclusive representation of the country’s collective responses. Without deep searching, however, the contents and structure represent the historical event as witnessed by people with limited agency or expertise over the control of their memories.

The “LOC 9/11 Documentary Project” includes more traditional archiving practices than either the September 11 National Memorial/Museum or Our Marathon. Experts designed the archive and created the infrastructure (metadata, long-term storage and preservation) and the collections. Although participating folklore societies, educational institutions, and interested private citizens donated content, the interpretation, presentation, and classification was determined by institutional guidelines and expert opinion. This does not mean that multiple and
diverse perspectives were not represented, but there was no participation in the construction of the archive itself.

National September 11 Memorial Museum: Commemorating Lives Lost and Solidifying Subject Identity

I travelled to the corporate offices of the National September 11 Memorial/Museum from Washington, D.C. by train. The distance from New York’s Penn Station to the World Trade Center is less than three miles and I had time to tour the Memorial and environs prior to my interviews. As with the Library of Congress, security guards and scanners process each visitor and once admitted, I was ushered to an elevator where I was met by Rose Deeb, curator and manager at the time of the Registries (the digitized component of the Memorial/Museum featuring public submissions of oral histories, memorials, and works of art commemorating the attacks of 9/11). Rose led me to a conference room, where two additional staff members: Jenny Pachucki, historian and curator of the Registries’ oral histories, and Alexandra Drukakis, curator of exhibits in the Memorial/Museum. We gathered at one end of a large conference table in a room adjacent to an expansive view of lower Manhattan. The contrast to the intimate surroundings of the American Folklife Center was comical. Yet, I was greeted warmly and my group interview went smoothly.

I previously sent my interview questions (Appendix A) to Rose Deeb, who shared them with her colleagues. My interviewees realized that the interview might not adhere to the script and that I preferred an open-ended conversation. Nevertheless, they immediately asked for my opinion of the physical Memorial and Museum. I hadn’t yet toured the Museum but I could share my impressions of the reflecting pools, trees, solemnity of the visiting crowds, and my surprise at
the rattling construction that cordoned off much of the public thoroughfare to the memorial. Alexandra is quick to point out the divisions created to distinguish historical documentation from memorialization. I make a mental note to tour the Museum as soon as I’ve recorded my field notes.

We began the interview with an overview of the website. Rose explained that the online registries continue to provide comfort to the victims’ families and survivors through their platforms for sharing and uploading stories. Rose was passionate about the value of the Registries and observed the popularity of this feature on the website surpassed all expectations. Although this site is only crowd-sourced by the fact of its public submissions, the social and technical needs of its local and national communities are reflected in some of its features. Rose cited the example of the site’s first text box, limited to 300 words. After much public complaint, the staff created an expandable box to suit shorter or longer memories. She added another incident, which she describes as being a “meta story.” A donor wanted to upload their story including pictures, but lacked the digital skills to capture and upload both into the Registries. This person used a cell phone to take a picture of the computer screen and then sent the photo to the Registries’ office. This unnecessary step was an interesting bit of the public’s varied levels of knowledge and skill required to participate in the project.

Rose spent much of her time with the technical applications of the Registries and when asked about online guides or tutorials for the average citizen contributing to the site. Rose says it is minimal. “There is no hand holding” regarding their outreach. People who wish to submit stories, etc. are own their own except for the most basic directions for uploading item type and adding minimal metadata. My interviewees were adamant that the Registries would represent no
overarching narrative and that the Memoriam would be comprised of individual stories, depicted and related in uplifting, celebratory accounts.

Alex (Alexandra) directed the discussion towards the physical Memorial/Museum and explains that each part of the memorial and historical section was carefully and purposefully designed. She said that the paths and spaces are designed for either linear, chronological progression through the exhibits, or affording non-linear and acoustic experiences with the contents. There are alcoves which feature images and voice-overs of more sensitive or disturbing stories and there are plaques that identify the content as potentially disturbing and somewhat graphic. During my visit, I did not observe anything as horrible as you would see in a film or TV show, but because the horror was real, even a scream, the sound of shattering glass, or a trembling voice evoked sadness and a sense of overwhelming devastation.

I asked my interviewees to describe their policy decisions regarding the digitization and presentation of the collections. Rose, Jenny, and Alex agreed that the memoriam is pretty much permanent, but that they will continue to add collections to the museum and Registries, including a recent acquisition of documents from the NY Department of Corrections, who were also dispatched to the WTC on 9/11. Our discussion frequently oscillated back and forth between the physical site and the website collections and I realized there was a seamless connection between the two. As NS11MM staff members, their curatorial tasks overlapped between the physical and virtual sites.

Alex spoke briefly about the collections management tool and explained the website is open-source. The staff had to adapt the traditional parameters of finding aids and describing
collections to suit their particular needs and mission, but adhered to the values expressed by the W3C.\textsuperscript{52} As a result they created several iterations of the database and vocabulary before they could arrive at standard now visible in the website. She was also particularly involved with the Artists’ Registries and described some of the more compelling contributions. Like the Atocha memorial, there are drawings and illustrations of a Guernica-inspired attack on 9/11 and she mentioned an artist, Selma Aratsu, who used ground zero imagery and Picasso’s Guernica to inspire her artwork. Another artist, Gregory Saucedo, lost a brother to 9/11 and homes to both Hurricane Katrina and the storm, Sandy. His unique and tragic losses form the inspiration for his art. The online curation of these works resemble the standards used for online art museums but do not link beyond the Registries.

Jenny expressed her desire to obtain a voice recording for each victim represented in the Memorial. She admitted this “may be an impossible goal,” but such was her hope and her belief in the importance of representing each victim of the attack. She added that “it’s a funny position” to be recording a living history while it is still fresh in the collective memory and culture of New York City. However, she believed the public was still seeking an affirmation of community and that contributors from outside New York also wanted to feel they were part of that mourning community. She sought stories to accompany artifacts donated to the Museum, including the

\textsuperscript{52} The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) promotes global standards and best practices in web development for the continuing growth and freedom of access to information. Open source platforms, collaboration among developers, and ethical policies are some of the policies implemented by the NS11MM in tandem with the mission of the W3C.
experience of a retired NYPD detective who contributed his boots, the soles of which were burned and now on display.

I was intrigued by the interdependence and crossover of their curating tasks regarding both the physical and virtual components of the NS11MM. I later learn that the website was originally designed to update the public on the construction of the Memorial/Museum. Although the website continues to expand its features and functions, including advertisement of extensive fundraising and providing numerous, exemplary educational programs, it does not substitute for on-site visits and, in fact, with the exception of the Registries, provides little access to the collections housed within the physical site. That admission is charged (with exceptions to families of victims and on the date, September 11), and a museum gift shop is provided reinforces the impression that this memorial is an integral part of trauma culture and disaster tourism.

The NS11MM draws support and inspiration from the city’s architecture, artists, museum curators, families, and corporate sponsors. It is a spectacular hybridization of museum and memorial, virtual and physical spaces, and educational outreach and tourism unified under the non-profit organization, the “Foundation,” (The National September 11 Memorial Museum and the World Trade Center Foundation).

To comprehend the sheer terror and vast emptiness produced by the 9/11 attacks, the memorial provides an embodied experience produced through the broadcast voices, sirens, screams, and damaged artifacts left behind. The Memorial expresses this horror acoustically. Although you can progress through the historical section chronologically, and descend into the
memorial slowly and sparingly like entering a tomb, this sequence does not mitigate the effects of the surrounding cacophony and alternate paths and exhibits that bombard the senses. Entering the Memoriam, I encountered panels with text and audio outlined on the continent from which they originated. Panels represent the North and South American continents, Europe and Africa, and Asia and Australia. The narratives are grouped chronologically and thematically, and succeed or overlap one another.

Figure 20: Photograph of the slurry wall, a remaining structure from the original Twin Tower on view in the Museum and taken by the author during her site visit in 2014: reminiscent of the ruins of Pompeii.

Phrases that flashed on the wall were also evident in the S11 Documentary Project’s stories and included: “Hearts stopped,” “hearts sank,” “Fear,” “We knew we were under attack, “It was a beautiful morning,” and “It felt like a movie…surreal.” This was a gallery of witnesses

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53 A Bostonian and sign maker for the memorial on my train from NYC to Boston said he was actually critical of this feature and that the repetition of the voices was “annoying.”
whose words were accompanied by large photographs taken of the shocked and tearful expressions on the faces of people watching the Twin Towers flame and collapse. The images featured people crying, hands covering mouths, all eyes looking upward, and hands over their hearts, depicting the speechless trauma of that moment. There were many other sights and sounds I recorded in my field notes, which I discuss in-depth in Chapter 7, where I discuss the triangulation of my field notes and other ethnographic data with my discourse analyses of the contents. Yet, I must state that there were particular items that were arresting and captured a mood and feeling that not only resonated with me, but that seemed to pull together the poignancy of this Memorial. That is, there is a beautiful looping video of the city at dusk following the attack. The smoke is thick and swirls past the tops of the buildings that frame a glorious sunset. Accompanying this video is the creator’s haunting melody, fashioned from fragments of sounds and recordings he made throughout the day. It was hauntingly beautiful and captured the settling melancholy that pieced the fragments of fear and terror into a community united in mourning.

Although the Museum (historical section) presented more disturbing images and sounds, I was not re-traumatized by the exhibits, but recognized the overarching narratives of American innocence, heroism of the firemen and military forces, and New York City’s (I.e., Lower Manhattan’s) temporary vulnerability, only to have its power and vibrancy quickly restored. These narratives are particularly evident in the website, as gleaned from my review of the site and content analyses.
Figure 21: Screenshots of the 9/11 Memorial/Museum homepage taken several months apart. The top image features a menu bar, side bar ads, and social media links prepare online and on site visitors. The use of yellow for “Donate” separates this function in an unobtrusive manner. The bottom two screenshots were taken a year after the 9/11 Memorial/Museum opened. Many of the site guides have been removed, information simplified, and dazzling photography enhances each section. Each section listed on the menu bar now appears yellow when that page is active.

The website’s Memorial mission statement commands visitors to “remember,” “honor,” “respect,” and “recognize” the “sacrifices” of innocent victims and first responders, and the “endurance” of those who survived. The command can also be construed as a plea to perform one’s national duty, subtly weaving the sacred, religious tones of mourning and remembrance with the secular religion, American patriotism. The Memorial proclaims it is a “place made sacred through tragic loss,” and adds recognition to compassionate “others” that showed support to the city and nation. As a national memorial, the NS11MM includes exhibits and memorial walls for lives lost at the Pentagon and in Shanksville, PA. It also includes a memorial to victims of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, enabling mourners to coalesce the losses at this site
and interpret each as the consequence of enemy terrorist attack. The Memorial is thus both a commemoration of individual lives lost and the survival of a city and nation.

The Memorial/Museum mission statement asserts it will “Bear solemn witness to the terrorist attacks” and honor both the victims of the attacks and those who risked their lives for others. It also expands its potential audience by including “all who demonstrated extraordinary compassion in the aftermath” (“Mission Statements” 9/11 Memorial). Although similar in rhetoric—using the pathos of the event to generate ethical responses and shape subject identity (patriotism)—the Memorial/Museum mission statement distinguishes its function through gathering and sustaining living, collective memories of 9/11.

It follows that the Memorial and the Memorial/Museum constructed separate collections that are uniquely described by their corresponding finding aids and metadata. The finding aids were adapted from traditional museum and archival guidelines so that the staff could respond to the needs of the community and partners within the Foundation. Several iterations of the database and controlled vocabulary were tested before arriving at the current standards used to create online exhibits and collections (Drakakis “Interview”). As the work of mourning and recovery progresses over time, the Memorial’s exhibit, “In Memoriam” (featured displays and interactive kiosks representing the individual lives lost) will remain largely fixed as a permanent collection. Exceptions to this rule include the discovery of organizations or large groups previously excluded from the exhibit, such as the NY Department of Corrections who were dispatched to the World Trade Center on 9/11 (Deeb, Pachucki, and Drakakis “Interviews”).
Other components of the *9/11MM*, however, continue to grow and the appeal to contribute remains unabated. The educational outreach and sponsored community events, such as the 5K run, have assumed greater visibility on the website since its inception and the popularity and size of the Registries continue to expand, particularly in the section, “Oral Remembrances.” These oral histories may be collected face-to-face, directly uploaded to the website, or deposited through the partnership with Story Corps. The symbiotic relationship between the website and the physical site and face-to-face outreach is also evident in the educational programs, which include K-12 classroom visits, lesson plans, and university lessons and graduate study fellowships. That the website would serve to augment and enhance the physical site, rather than serve as its substitute was understood from the beginning.

During the decade following the attacks, the 911memorial.org website was established to provide a central location for soliciting donors and providing updates on the progress of the Memorial. In 2011, the website was updated to provide the public greater access to the Memorial’s layout and developing exhibits, employing interactive apps for mobile devices to further engage the public. Later that year, the Memorial was open to the public and by 2014 the Museum was officially open to the public.

The website’s interface and open-source platform, Drupal, is adapted for large museums but is flexible enough to accommodate the growing numbers of contributors. The website foregrounds the importance of public participation and support of the 911 Memorial/Museum through its “commands” and many interactive features. Infusion, a web software development company, developed the interactive timelines and “Lady Liberty” (a virtual exhibit with zoomable images and annotations attached to selected items of a fire station shrine. Anonymously
placed at the station, this reproduction of the Statue of Liberty was used as an armature for commemorative objects and letters). Infusion’s greatest contribution, however, is in the design and interactivity of the Registries (digitized collections of oral histories, maps, and artwork).

Public participation (albeit, not in the sense of participatory archiving) is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the website and Foundation. Participation is enhanced by the site’s interactive design, mobile apps, and ongoing solicitation for contributions, whether financial or content-related. It is, nonetheless, reduced by a tiered partnership (families of victims and financial donors represent those having greater access or control over policies). The type of participant is thus less diverse, or at least more tightly defined, in the NS11MM than in the previously discussed archive/memorials. For example, NS11MM participants are identified as visitors (tourists), educators, donors of funds, contributors of content, family members and survivors. The pre-classification of visitors, donors, and contributors assumes a subjective perspective and, hence, assigns subject identities to the participants. Unlike the classifications that emerged from examining the contents of the crowd sourced items in the LC’s “September 11 Documentary Project,” or the September 11 Digital Archive, the long established and well-coordinated policies for curating and preserving artistic and historical artifacts between the cultural heritage and civic organizations in New York City shape the ethics and aesthetics of both website and Memorial/Museum.
Key Findings

From my interviews and observations, I learned that the archivists/curators responded ethically\(^5\) to their tasks—citing moral judgment as the basis for creating policy as opposed to strictly following disciplinary practice. They also responded politically—negotiating terms of ownership, representation, and long-term preservation with all participants in the archive (contributors and users, experts and the general public). Ethical and political issues are necessarily discussed among the experts, but they also often appear as justification for the archive/memorial as stated in the Mission or “About” pages of the website. One of the overarching themes emerging from my interviews with the archivists and curators responsible for developing their respective archives of disaster was their vulnerability to depression and posttraumatic stress as a consequence of interpreting and ingesting the emotionally laden artifacts and memories. Ingesting is archival jargon used to describe the workflow for selecting, cataloging, and preserving items into the archive. The connotation of absorbing into the body is also applicable to disaster archive/memorials. As secondary or tertiary responders to crises, the archivists and curators of disaster collections ingest objects present at the traumatic event or created during mourning. The emotional challenges facing these archivists and curators pricked the body more deeply than other ethical dilemmas, including the balance between achieving objectivity/accuracy and providing space for grieving/mourning and healing.

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\(^5\) When I inquired what guideposts were consulted for making difficult decisions, the responses varied according to discipline, and could be supported in professional manuals.
For example, LC folklorist Ann Hoog was emotionally unable to share her feelings and describe her work with family and friends while working on the “September 11 Documentary Project. “

Another significant finding pertains to the representation of grief and mourning in disaster archives. Mourning as it is represented by the archive/memorial has spatial and temporal limits despite there being policies that permit ongoing contributions or refresh its contents to keep alive the memories. The diversity of expression and large numbers of items ingested are confined to the mourners (contributors) and not to the public at large, who lack permission to comment upon the archived items. This policy is not unlike the tacit rules for preserving space and avoiding overlapping of objects in the sidewalk memorials. Items in the temporary shrines are visible to the passers-by, spreading rather than stacking when space is needed. However, there are tacit rules: don’t block another’s objects; civic organizations are temporarily forbidden from removing the shrine until a certain amount of mourning time has passed. The sidewalk shrine becomes a sacred space, albeit temporary. It also becomes inscribed in collective, cultural memory if the objects and documentation of those objects is stored in the archive. However, both time and space limit this ritual of mourning when sidewalks are cleared and daily life resumes.

On repeated examinations of the items and their templates for structuring memories, there is an evident “arc of recovery.” From coding such themes as cognitive awareness and reflection, and observing words and actions that denote a sense of duty, morality, or ethical responsibility, it quickly becomes apparent that some form of cognitive, spiritual, or emotional growth is taking place through the mediums of storytelling and archiving. Notwithstanding this “arc of recovery” epitomized in so many of the archived oral histories, or conveyed through humor and irony in satirical illustrations, the disaster archives do not generally provide an overarching narrative.
Refraining from constructing overarching narratives and interpretations is an ethical decision for most of the archivists I interviewed, but it may also indicate a cultural inability to make sense of horrific events. As we are still living with the traumatic memories archived, it may be that our database aesthetics and ethics of presenting multiple perspectives is our only viable means for digitally memorializing disasters.

As discovered from my previous examination of several disaster archives, the long-term sustainability of these local or national collecting archives is both a measure of sustained trauma and the ability of communities to prepare for future trauma. Archives and museums may already have disaster preparation plans to protect their collections and assets, and the digitization of grief collections largely conforms to the standardized metadata and technical coding put in place to ensure migration and long-term preservation.

**Summary**

Disaster archives provide their contributors and also their constituents, guides for integrating their private experiences with the archive’s socio-technical networking apparatus, despite Rose’s statement to the contrary (“No hand holding”). The questionnaires and formats used to distinguish subjects, including witnesses, survivors, citizens, corporate bodies, and sympathetic foreigners, both reflect and reinforce the social and cultural base of the community. Identifying and deciding whose memories will be preserved is a function of the apparatus and informs the dimensions of subject identity and also ethical responsibility. The disaster archive as a socio-technical networking apparatus also defines the means for expressing and preserving memories, such as collaborating with historians and then ingesting and preserving their collections as oral testimonies. Long-term preservation of disaster archives is assisted through
building and sustaining public interest and support for the contents. This requires not only inviting public participation through co-authorship, but also by sponsoring anniversary celebrations and other types of community outreach. Public mourning and affirmations of civic and social identity are dimensions of disaster archives that intersect with participation. To support this argument, I provide an in-depth discussion of the data findings, including my interviews with the project directors of *Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive & WBUR Oral History Project*, City of Boston archivist, Marta Crilly, independent curator Rainey Tisdale, and several residents of Boston who responded to my survey. This last portion of my research junket and the concluding evidence for my data follows in Chapter 7.
The Boston Marathon Monument is a granite medallion impressed on a sidewalk in Copley Square and flanked by four granite posts. Inscribed on the medallion are the names of runners and the map of the marathon. Another inscription features the last three lines of Tennyson’s poem, “Ulysses.” Although there is no permanent memorial constructed for the victims of the BMB, the inscription resonates with “Boston Strong,” a rallying cry of protest and solidarity following the Boston Marathon Bombings, of April 15, 2013.

Unlike the 9/11 terrorist attacks that propelled its horror from the sky, these bombings hurled their destructive force at street level. But they also beset the city with grief and mourning for several weeks and months afterwards. Within hours following the bombings and for months afterwards, street barriers to the bombing sites were covered with running shoes and runners’ bibs, flowers and teddy bears, and other assorted objects of mourning. Signs, shirts, and hats emblazoned with “Boston Strong” among other symbols and slogans of Bostonian civic pride
and unity memorialized the tragedy, coupling the formation of civic identity with mourning the loss of lives and also of place memories.  

These spontaneous and temporary memorials helped the city express its grief and mourning, replacing the traumatic memories of terror and chaos with sacred vows and pledges of unity. How did the cultural heritage institutions respond to the bombings, perceived as threatening to the social identity if not national security of most Bostonians? What could these cultural experts provide that social media and news organizations had not already documented and preserved?

In this chapter, I examine the circumstances of the Boston Marathon Bombings and subsequent efforts by various communities to memorialize the tragedy. Specifically, I analyze three different initiatives for mediating the public’s mourning and memorializing of the bombings: (1) Our Marathon, a digital archive/memorial; (2) the City of Boston Archives, an institutional (traditional) archive; and (3) “Dear Boston: Messages from the Marathon Memorial,” an exhibit created by an independent museum curator. My research not only examines how each organization digitally represented the bombings but also includes site visits and interviews as well as the use of a survey instrument to measure, in the case of Our Marathon website, the effectiveness of an online memorial.

As a result, I posit that the digital archive/memorial assumes a historical perspective for archiving and memorializing despite the lack of narrative structure and a mission to promote

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55 “Place memories” refers to the phenomenon in which people use specific sites to remember events or occasions. The Boston Marathon’s finish line, Boylston Street, Copley Square, and the Boston Public Library are places associated with cultural heritage, public holidays, and positive emotions.
reconstruction of communities in mourning. The disaster archive/memorial documents public history, developed through standardized templates and metadata for arranging and preserving the contents. The standardization of these details is also what enables the archive’s net to be cast wide and afford the seeker multiple means for winnowing the chaotic tide of memories and images. The institutional archivist and the independent curator, conversely, examine a smaller sampling of a given yield, adapting their enclosures to fit the dimensions of their collected objects--and to the politics associated with the city’s healing process.

Further, I argue, what has been largely hidden from public knowledge is the emotional duress placed upon cultural heritage workers and the role that morals and ethics play in developing archives that document and memorialize traumatic events. I illuminate the psychological risks and emotional effects experienced by my interviewees, and propose protocols for dealing with the stress of representing this kind of trauma in an honest yet respectful way.
From Sidewalk to Cold Storage: Preserving the Boston Marathon Memorials—and Exhibiting Content for the Internet

Figure 22: Aaron Tang, photograph “1st Boston Marathon blast from 2nd floor a half block away.” April 16, 2013. Creative Commons’ license

To begin, the work of gathering and categorizing Our Marathon’s grief collections was dispersed among the consortium of civic and academic institutions partnering with Northeastern University. Unlike the solitary work of Rainey Tisdale, independent curator who created the exhibit, “Dear Boston: Letters from the Marathon Memorial” and the limited staff of the City of Boston Archives, Alicia Peaker and Jim McGrath, co-directors of Our Marathon, worked with an extensive network of independent bodies and corresponding disciplines, including the NPR affiliate, WBUR, and the Center for the History of Medicine (alliance of the Boston Medical
Library and Harvard Medical School). As with *QuakeStudies, Our Marathon* operates from a global perspective, guided by the policies and ethics of the World Wide Web Consortium and associated international cultural heritage organizations (e.g., the Digital Public Library of America).

The grassroots memorials that initially covered street blockades to the crime scenes were consolidated and relocated to Copley Square when Boylston Street was re-opened. Some of the memorial artifacts that were removed were stored in the mayor’s office. Conversations regarding what would become of the memorials circulated within museum organizations, the public library, hospitals, and other public agencies including the City Archives in the days and weeks following the bombings. Yet, coordination of these agencies did not immediately result. That there lacked an immediate, coordinated response by the city’s public heritage institutions was particularly distressing to curator Rainey Tisdale. She believed not only that the memorials needed to be preserved, but that there also needed to be a collective, cultural response that would help Bostonians make sense of this “bad thing” (Tisdale “Interview”).

Despite what Tisdale considered an uncoordinated attempt by multiple cultural institutions and organizations to initially respond to the bombings, other civic organizations including One Fund Boston, began amassing resources to support the victims’ families and survivors twenty-six hours after the bombings. Discussions between the library, museum organizations, and other cultural institutions eventually led to the City of Boston Archives assuming primary responsibility for storage and preservation of the memorial artifacts. Thus, begins my story of the gradual coalition of civic and cultural organizations that banded together for the healing of Boston.
At Northeastern University’s NU Lab for Texts, Maps, and Networks (center for developing research in the digital humanities and computational social sciences), the students and staff began developing a digital archive and oral history project shortly after the bombings. Students, staff, and volunteers began collecting artifacts and stories from the public in May 2013 during “One Run,” an invitation to Marathon runners to complete their last, unfinished mile and to the public spectators who would cheer the runners (St. Martin “Researchers developing Boston Marathon digital archive”). Our Marathon’s staff collaborated with PBS station, WBUR, to gather oral histories, and hosted exhibits of selected artifacts lent by the City of Boston Archives on October 15, 2013.

The preservation of ephemera and memorabilia from the temporary shrines and also from public submissions taxed the facilities and workload of the Boston City archivists. In an attempt to preserve the items before destruction by weather and passers-by, the city archivists attempted to remove the more fragile items, such as paper, although not without some interference from the news media. In deference to the bombing survivors and families who were not able to view the memorial, it was not dismantled until late June 2013. Once this date was established and the public notified, the process of dismantling went smoothly, although not without tears and family members retrieving the more personalized condolence artifacts. By January 2014, Iron Mountain agreed to take on the bulk of the digitization and preservation of the memorial artifacts and continues to store the artifacts based on their pledge to the city of Boston. (Crilly “Interview”).
Prior to my site visit to Northeastern University, I examined the website. I was, admittedly, nonplussed by my first visit to Our Marathon’s home page because I did not realize the corporate logo and banner, colored in dark blue with a hint of yellow, represented the Boston Athletic Association (BAA), nor that this symbol evoked raw emotion, reverence, and pride from Bostonians. I would later learn that this choice of a simple logo and banner was based on an “ethical” aesthetics—that the content was already so laden with emotion that heightening the color or adding more images might either overwhelm the visitor or detract from the pathos of the contents. Ethical decisions are intertwined with aesthetics, and each component of a disaster archive challenges the limits of technical and professional standards.

Our Marathon’s mission statement reads, in part, “The archive will serve as a long-term memorial, preserving these records for students and researchers, providing future historians with invaluable, local windows into an important national event” (“About” Our Marathon). In just
one sentence, the mission statement of Our Marathon distinguishes its functions, audience, and ethical responsibilities. “Archive” as stated in the singular tense, denotes “power, memory, and identity” (Cook 517) as opposed to “archives” in the plural form, which would denote a series of collections that change over time through the interventions of archivists, the public, and technologies. Unlike the Pan Am Lockerbie Archives, which preserves the provenance of its family and corporate archives, which are then grouped into collections, the collections in Our Marathon comprise one archive. Although both of these archives function as centralized portals to their respective collections, the Lockerbie Archives also function as repositories for family and corporate memorabilia, whereas Our Marathon groups items into collections by theme or type, which are easily accessible through other data fields, including creator, locations, date, and keywords. There are a few collections titled after the donors, including “Victoria Papas’ AWD Course (2013)” and “NPUR’s Photos and Stories,” but the students and staff at NEU seeded the majority of the collections. All searches may be conducted through item types and tags, which diminishes the significance of provenance, or “respect des fonds” (archival principle for maintaining the record or and chain of ownership and authenticity of the donated item).

The commitment to “serve as a long-term memorial” (even when the time for mourning may have passed) and “preserving these records” for a future audience, reflect the professional core values and ethics of archivists and digital humanists. The Society of American Archivists promotes the profession’s core values and ethics on their website, indicating service and preservation as two of their core values. “Our Marathon’s staff did not believe the archive would continue to expand due to the natural attrition of graduating students and volunteers” (McGrath and Peaker “Interview”). The most recent addition of crowd-sourced content is dated 2013,
whereas the website is continuously updated, evidenced by the rotation of featured exhibits and contents. Nevertheless, the website provides the city a participatory digital memorial, generating interactivity through social media exchanges (blogs and links), and continued solicitation for contributing content.

From this content analysis I also ascertained broad dimensions including healing and recovery, subject identity (the socially defined self, as a survivor, witness, first responder, archivist, etc.), and ethics (professional practices or moral behaviors). Our Marathon’s mission statement conveys themes of resilience and civic identity in addition to authority. Words that evoke tactile sensation, like the expression “woven into the fabric” of the community, and “mend and strengthen the fabric” are affective and emotional triggers. Similarly, words that conjure flow and connectedness, such as “forging a river of people” envision spiritual or emotional connections that metaphorically extend the boundaries of the Boston Marathon community.

Marathon spectators, runners, visitors to the city, and Boston residents at home and abroad are among the members of the mourning community privileged to participate in the city’s healing and recovery.

Healing and recovery is a broad dimension indicated by trauma narratives and verbal statements that convey cognitive or spiritual growth following the aftermath of a traumatic experience. More common are statements that reflect resilience, a state of equilibrium and

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56 According to George Bonnano who cites several case studies of individuals overcoming traumatic effects induced by aversive events, “recovery” occurs after suffering pathological or posttraumatic stress symptoms. The dissipation of these symptoms occurs over time before resuming life at “pre-event levels.” “Resilience,” on the other hand, describes the individual capacity to resume pre-event, cognitive and emotional functions in a more “stable trajectory” that commonly develops into posttraumatic growth (Bonnano “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience”).
continued functioning despite the chaotic circumstances. Examples include, “My mind was as clear as it could be for someone who had been running for 4 hours and 11 minutes. Having been living in New York City during 9/11 and witness to the burning towers from street level, I immediately switched into crisis mode” (Casarano, “At the time,” Our Marathon), and “So much to take in and overwhelming your senses…Hindsight, foolish thing to be looking out the window” (O’Brien “WBUR Oral History Project: Steve Phipps,” Our Marathon).

The collections, tags, and keyword searches retrieve items representing the physical and emotional healing of the bombing survivors, and also the entire city of Boston. Featured collections, such as the Boston City Archives and the Copley Square Memorials represent resilience, healing, and recovery through photographs of the temporary memorials and from letters and cards conveying hope and wishes for recovery. By conducting a keyword search of “healing,” I retrieved seven letters and/or cards from mayors, an interfaith council, and schoolchildren. The keyword, “recovery,” brought forth thirty-five items including cards from the Western Mass. Correctional Alcohol center in addition to the letters and cards described above. Searches using the word “strong” sans Boston also resulted in seven items that originated outside the city. This term was used to describe the perceived resilience of Bostonians. “Resilience,” in contrast, netted zero results, an indication, perhaps, of popular culture’s conflation of “recovery” with “resilience.” Although the cards and images of sidewalk shrines and memorials evidenced the dimension of healing and recovery, or resilience, I found the most compelling examples in the oral histories.
Figure 24: Screenshot of WBUR Oral History Project home page. Each interview features a large photograph of the interviewee and also includes a detailed description and recording. Lengthier recordings are divided into shorter segments.

The collection, “WBUR Oral History Project” describes its stories as representative of “individuals whose lives were immediately and irrevocably changed…” and the majority of those obtained from the Spaulding Rehabilitation Center convey positive affirmations of healing and recovery. One narrative, however, described an inner journey of depression and ethical conflict. Dr. Leslie Morse, first responder at the Boston Marathon bombing, recounted her posttraumatic experience after witnessing the chaotic aftermath and human suffering at the bombing sites. She described her inability to reconcile witnessing a “horrible act of cruelty” with her physician’s creed to help others and retain hope. Dr. Morse spent a week picking up tree limbs and sticks, piling them neatly, and burning them in a pit. Eventually, the looping words and repetitive images stopped and she was able to resume daily life (Guberman, Jayne “WBUR Oral History Project: Dr. Leslie Morse” Our Marathon).
Many of the social media items and news accounts reported traumatic experiences including confusion and fear. If these accounts included reflective or evaluative statements, I indexed the texts as “evidence of trauma and recovery.” Most of the eyewitness accounts produced a narrative arc similar to the 9/11 accounts, proceeding from shock followed by sensory detail, to thoughts of concern for others and an assessment or questioning of what had happened. The collections that best represent evidence of recovery from trauma, however, are the oral histories gathered from the Spaulding Rehabilitation Center and the Neatline exhibit, “’Our City’: Boston and The Boston Red Sox.” In contrast to the posttraumatic stress of Dr. Morse, another Spaulding Rehab Center doctor, David Crandell, offered an optimistic assessment of the bombing’s aftermath. Rather than focus on loss, he focused on function, reminding his amputees to define themselves by what they did with their lives. For Dr. Crandell, “Boston Strong,” meant watching people succeed, as in a patient taking his first step with prosthesis. Not surprisingly, hospitals and medical centers are major sponsors of the Boston Marathon, as well as being present at the race as first responders. The oft repeated narratives in Spaulding’s oral histories and represented by this exhibit was that sports is integral to health and recovery.
Multiple dimensions and themes exist within single items, of course. The dimension, “Subject identity formation” refers to the interpellation of self to society shaped by family, religion, education, and other socializing forces. As Althusser describes, the subject identity is part of the scaffolding or structure in society that enables individuals to define themselves in relation to others (“Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”). I ascertained subject identity by analyzing language via the oral histories, written narratives, photographs, and various item types (like letters of condolences or tweets and blog excerpts). Elena Agapie, a researcher for the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard at the time of the Marathon bombings, contributed her collection of Marathon memes that encompassed national and local patriotism,
dark humor, and references to similar acts of terrorism. The memes “Boston Strong,” “B Strong,” “Stay Strong,” and “Boston Wicked Strong” represent variations on a theme of fierce New England patriotism and athleticism. Their voluminous appearance in tweets, on posters, and walls indicated civic pride and an identity with greater Boston that, at least temporarily, superseded local identities as “Southies,” or Watertown residents, for example.

I also detected formation of subject identity through emotional (“I heart Boston”) and colloquial expressions and metaphors commonly understood by the local population of the narrator (“the staties flew down 47”). From this broad dimension, I created sub-categories, including the empathetic outsider (tourist), the activist outsider, the insider who used the “narrative” as catharsis, and the insider who used the “narrative” to reinforce positive images of the disaster (its outcome as in recovery and uniting the community).

Subject identity can also be ascertained through visual analysis. The photographs of shrines indicate the photographer’s proximity to mourning and also distance from the traumatic event. Proximity to mourning is evidenced by the images of shrine objects and also of people visiting the shrine. The photographer may be documenting the place of mourning, the objects of mourning (symbols of grief, innocence, religion, anger, etc.), or how the community is mourning (witnessing the mourners and visitors). Gawking and grieving take place at the same place and may be photographed similarly. But can we distinguish these motivations from the image or caption? Who took the photograph may have some bearing, such as those photographs uploaded by archival staff members. They would have an interest in historic documentation. But, the photographs could be repurposed by curators and used to support a narrative of mourning. Those photographs, however, may contain symbols of patriotism, acts of violence, or images of human
emotion. Thus, does the photograph and its context within the archive project a certain meaning and a certain expected response? Ironic photographs invite reflection.

The close-up of the teddy bear at the spontaneous shrine invites emotional response. And, the photograph of the clouds of dust caused by the bombing (or collapse of the towers) presents the distanced perspective of a witness/journalist/historian. We do not apprehend emotion from this type of photograph. It is intended to place us at the scene of disaster and transform the viewer of the photograph into a witness. In Figure 5, the photograph of the barefooted girl descending the steps with hands raised and in front of a police with his gun drawn, circulated among various social media platforms and was ingested into a meme collection created by Elena Agapie, then researcher for Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society. This photograph invites analysis, not only because it conjures innocence before police brutality, but also because it is part of a collection of memes—a collection that inspires metacognitive and critical analysis. Although this photograph was not altered, nor had it been previously associated with an altogether different purpose, Agapie selected this item for her meme collection.
Figure 26: Elena Agapie, “Photo of woman coming out of the house,” Our Marathon, accessed March 20, 2016, http://marathon.neu.edu/items/show/6174. The photograph ironically features the policeman’s gun pointed at the unarmed and vulnerable (shoeless) girl, while waving her to the assumed greater safety of the street. Were it not in a collection of memes, the photograph might have been perceived as more provocative. Even when accessed from another collection or item type, this photograph has been tagged a “meme.”

The makeshift memorials that provided spaces for collective mourning and documentation of a grieving city are represented in Our Marathon via hundreds of public submissions and through several collections. Evidence of mourning was pronounced with a profusion of written messages accompanying objects and illustrations. These shrines are both forms of vernacular “speech” and performances, providing the slate on which to inscribe feelings and thoughts, and the space for visiting, touching, and commemorating alongside others.
The teddy bear that depicts innocence, the candle that represents spirit and life, or the American flag that projects both patriotism and anti-otherness exemplify the “primary grammar” used to construct and make meaningful the makeshift memorial (Fraenkel “Street Shrines and the Writing of Disasters”). The dimension of mourning, notwithstanding, I encountered evidence of subject identity formation when I examined the collections and items of spontaneous memorials.

There are several collections through which a visitor can access images of Boston’s temporary memorials. “The City of Boston Archives Collection” provides a highly selective sampling of items taken from the memorials. These items, including posters, objects, and submissions to the mayor’s office represent sympathy and solidarity with Boston as a united community. The collection, “Copley Square Memorial,” provides evidence of the public’s responses to the memorials, more diverse in content and perspective. Whereas the “City of Boston Archive’s” collection features staff photography of the individual items and their material qualities, the “Copley Square Memorial” collection includes publicly submitted photographs of the memorials. The latter style of photography is more journalistic, witnessing the witnesses, so to speak. These photographs may also show evidence of the photographer’s deliberations for creating affective responses, like using wide-angle lenses, shallow depth of field, or choosing a monochrome of black and white.
Examinations of the collections and their contents yield valuable information about the role of memes, symbols of patriotism, and rituals of public mourning in establishing collective memories of the Boston Marathon bombing. As mentioned previously, memes (cultural icons, tropes, or ideas that spread virally and may be humorous or disturbing) employ irony and popular culture. I don’t know whether the memes associated with the Boston Marathon Bombings were intended to distress the recipient, relieve stress, or generate multiple replications, but their viral sweeps through social media generated relationships to the trauma, if not solidarity with the grieving community. Like many of the memes in Our Marathon, the objects and messages left at makeshift memorials revealed dimensions of civic pride and a moral sense of duty to Bostonians, as evidenced by such statements as “Never forget” and “I stand with Boston.” A further analysis of the archive’s interface and usability relative to social media provides still more insight into how the site shapes participation and long-term usefulness. In the following section, an analysis of the site’s functionality reveals how well Our Marathon maintains relevancy to the public’s needs, while also ensuring long-term preservation of its contents.
Analyzing the Functionality and Interface of the Archive: Exploring Ethical and Aesthetic Dimensions

The interface does not only refer to the page layout, menu bar, and various icons that enable the user to engage with the digital content. It mediates the content (data) between the algorithms (database logic) and the networks (socio-technical infrastructures). *Our Marathon* operates as a database that includes social media links and digital tools for augmenting participation. Social media exchanges are ubiquitous during times of crisis and *Our Marathon’s* social media collections had been consumed long before being ingested into the archive. The consumer culture that drives social media and increasingly, education, also helps shape the disaster archive, evidenced by its links to a plethora of social media platforms. In turn, the archive’s consumer base is partially sustained through its own social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr), as well as from its outreach to both K-12 and higher education.

The digital exhibit tool, Neatline, also facilitates user participation while providing additional context and interpretation. The tool may be used to create interactive time lines, but in *Our Marathon*, it is used to annotate images that pop-up when the user tracks over the linked areas. In the Neatline exhibit, “Messages from the Copley Square Memorial” illustrates the diversity and heterogeneity of Boston’s residents and visitors by highlighting words and phrases in foreign languages, various religions, and nationalities from a “One Fund poster. A second Neatline exhibit, “Our City: Boston and the Boston Red Sox,” annotates a photograph of Fenway Park, viewed from the position of a spectator in the stadium looking out onto the field at pre-

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57 Many of the platforms, however, promote educational uses, including apps for content management, citation, and more in-depth web analysis. Examples include Diigo, CiteULike, Evernote, and W3C HTML validator (“Share this Item On…” *Our Marathon*).
game. This exhibit reinforces the civic unity of Boston, as opposed to the overtones of international sympathy in the former exhibit. The annotations in “Our City” provide historical context and cultural significance, such as the pop up featured in figure 4, triggered by the featured jumbotron (large video screen). The embedded links may transport the user off site or back into the archive, reinforcing the value of metadata and linked data for understanding, as opposed to narrative structures designed for close reading.

Figure 28: “Our City: Boston and the Boston Red Sox,” a Neatline exhibit. Featured is a pop up annotation triggered by the photograph’s jumbotron. The embedded links in the annotation may lead to off site content or relate back to items in the archive.

The use of maps is another digital tool that identifies the location of where the item was recorded or the location of the event documented. When geo-tagged, the items may be accessed via the map, or the map may be viewed from the item’s description. Most items are geo-referenced, with the exception of the exhibits and oral histories. In accordance with Our
Marathon’s templates for uploading content, the contributor determines the locations rather than being automatically assigned through the item’s digital coding. Unless the metadata is automated (a policy used by web archives as well as Our Marathon for items lacking contributor metadata), the location is crowd-sourced. Donors from outside the United States, such as Kenyan school children, who sent condolence letters and drawings, indicated places of similarly experienced terrorist-induced disaster. Other items tagged “international responses” represented foreign countries or embassies allied with the United States, expressing political unity through common rituals of mourning.

Our Marathon’s integration of maps is particularly effective for verifying the proximity of the donor to the Marathon bombings. This verification can add authenticity to a survivor’s account or confirm political alliances with other, sympathetic nations, for example. Seeing the global map of donors reinforces the idea that others, beyond our national or state boundaries, care about the people affected by the bombing. Conversely, one could assume from this premise that an absence of other nations’ condolences would indicate their indifference. Of course, such assumptions are arbitrary and idiosyncratic. Significantly, Our Marathon’s mission statement and collections produce evidence of a unified civic and cultural polity, afforded partly by the omission of views that run counter to messages of hope and strength in Boston,\(^{58}\) and partly from the exhibits and maps that feature international solidarity.

\(^{58}\) There are a few items in Our Marathon that pose a critical or sardonic view of the public’s responses to the bombings. These include an interview with a Muslim-American doctor, who continued to wear her hijab while attending to her Marathon bombing victims, and of course, several cartoons and memes that employed humor to mock the investigations or tragedy of the bombings. Pro-Muslim or anti-American content that was expressed in letters or in messages left at the memorials were not published, but may be accessed at the City of Boston Archives or at Northeastern University.
The functionality of the site—how well the interface, database, and the exhibits and tools facilitate usage—is critical for the long-term preservation. The contribution guidelines request donors add the location, date, and description (with the exception of narratives, which are inherently descriptive) for each item type, thereby assuring its data will be linkable within the database and with other cultural heritage institutions, such as Archive-It.org, which is archiving Our Marathon’s collections. Long-term preservation becomes an ethical issue when the privacy and ownership of the item has not been established. Our Marathon’s contribution guidelines and templates control the degree and nature of crowdsourcing while granting donors intellectual ownership and rights to privacy (such as making items publicly visible, or retaining anonymity on the website). The archive’s terms of service provide contributors assurance that they will control the publication or their content, but that it will be managed and made accessible to scholars and researchers in perpetuity. Yet, it is up to the user to ethically access and use the contents.

Participatory archives depend on the social and cultural infrastructure, characterized by the face-to-face collaborations held between the sponsors and the public. Our Marathon’s home page features several civic organizations and cultural heritage institutions in addition to its academic affiliations. The social network of residents, city employees, volunteer staff from businesses and organizations, and even a self-appointed curator of the Copley Square (temporary) Memorial, combined their efforts to coordinate the selection and care of items to be ingested into the archive. True partnership between each member of the network may not have been possible, and many members of the greater Boston area were not represented in the archive (there are few items that portray the perspectives of Arab Americans, for example). The staff’s
experts created the policies, terms and conditions, and classifications of the items, which consequently reduced the possibility for a fully participatory archive (Gubrium and Harper; Theimer “Interview”).

Nevertheless, through the affiliated institutions and outreach efforts of the staff, thousands of items were accepted into the archive. From these interviews and site visit to Northeastern University, I gained insight into how Our Marathon became a portal for collectively remembering and memorializing the Boston Marathon Bombings. Collections representing the medical community, news organizations, and departments from within the university demonstrate the degree of collaboration and effort made to create a diverse and comprehensive archive. I also learned that the project directors’ emotions and moral obligations influenced their collection development and outreach into the community. This was made clear in the interviews, despite the fact that much of the collecting and descriptions of items was delegated to volunteer staff and donor organizations. Thus, the following section illuminates the professional ethics, moral reasoning, and effects of trauma that influenced Our Marathon’s curatorial policies.

**Our Marathon: An Interview with the “Builders” of the Digital Archive**

At the Marathon bombing’s one-year anniversary, an exhibit was held at the Boston Public Library. Emotions were still raw and public attendance at this and other BMB anniversary events was high. Prior to the anniversary, Northeastern University students and staff were creating a digital archive of the bombings. The project received financial support from several civic organizations and partnered with WBUR, the city libraries, and the Boston City Archives to collect and preserve the experiences and opinions of the public regarding the BMB and its
effects. The digital history platform, Omeka, was adopted and its features tweaked and augmented by the university’s NULab for texts, maps, & networks. Although similar in design and purpose to another Omeka-based archive, The September 11 Digital Archive, Northeastern wanted their site to excite scholars and researchers—to foster educational study and probe the database for answers to such questions as “What is the act of witnessing?” and “What is an act of mourning?” (McGrath “Interview”). The students and staff of Northeastern University were poised and positioned to assume the responsibility for gathering, curating, and documenting the public responses to the bombings being situated just blocks from where the disaster took place and having established a digital humanities center.

From my interviews with staff at the NS11MM, I was better prepared for my site visit and interview with the staff responsible for creating Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive & WBUR Oral History Project. As I did with my previous interviewees, I prepared for my June 24 2014 interview by sending, in advance, my questions and abstract of my dissertation. Although I had never met the co-investigators and project managers of Our Marathon, I was familiar with the platform they were using to construct their digital archive/memorial and planned to conduct a more in-depth field study of the experts and also their surrounding community. The archive’s server is located in Northeastern University’s digital lab on the second floor of the university’s library. While not controlled by the tight security of my previous site visits, I was also escorted to the lab and met by project manager, Jim McGrath, then completing his dissertation at the university.

The setting was much as one would expect of a digital humanities center on a university campus. Booths and tables were arranged for small group discussions and computer labs were
separated from the open lobby. Fellow project manager, Alicia Peaker, had just completed her PhD and was preparing for a postdoctoral position. Both she and McGrath had invested much time and effort in the development and management of the archive. She offered their reasons for selecting Omeka as a digital platform for their project, explaining that it was the best available, low entry software for preserving a historical record. The website provided a central location for collecting and sharing stories and they appreciated its flexible, open-source features that, in time, would enable the archive to add historical context and metadata. Peaker and McGrath agreed that they wanted to add a fair amount of metadata for the items collected, but were constrained by time limits. Omeka was familiar to them and offered convenient metadata fields. However, they still needed to customize the site because Omeka was not very conducive to crowd sourcing data. They had to design a plug-in tailored to social media documents and they claimed the site is a bit clumsy and cannot handle batch uploading. Nevertheless, they agreed that it served its dual original purpose to memorialize and archive the Marathon bombings.

The collections were largely finished within a few months, although it was not “highly curated” and the collections would require additional metadata for years to come. “The site and project is pretty much finished and was only intended to last through the first anniversary of the Boston Bombing,” Peaker explained. This was due, in part, to the natural attrition of graduating students, and also to the need to heal and “move on.” There were, however, recent additions that suggested ongoing site development, if not collection development, would be integral to the relevance and future uses of the archive. A student intern was developing lesson plans for teachers of students in grades K through 12 to use the collections as primary sources—a common practice on cultural heritage websites and archives. Another addition included a donation of
letters, some of which contained potentially upsetting content that compelled Peaker and McGrath to “censor” them. At the time of my interview they were developing policies whereby academics and other interested researchers would be able to access the controversial and censored materials unavailable to the public.

They were optimistic regarding the future applications of the archive and emphasized the potential of their social media collection, suggesting it could be used to research communications about the bombings and its aftermath. McGrath posed potential research questions, “What is an act of witnessing?” and “What is an act of mourning?” Both Peaker and McGrath hoped their collections would provide scholars and future researchers the answers to such questions. McGrath was especially interested in the flow of social media as a type of witnessing constructed through digital avatars and he had contributed some of his Tweets to the archive. Seeding an archive during its inception is not uncommon. The Hurricane Memory Bank included several items donated by the staff when the site went public and the Archive-it.org staff also establishes new collections or adds seeds (websites) prior to public participation (Brennan “Web 1.5,” Donovan “Interview”). McGrath wondered how the self (subject identity) would be impacted by these events and believed preservation of social media would help answer this question. Yet he was emphatic about protecting the privacy of the donors and discussed the importance of remaining sensitive to the community.

Peaker acknowledged the collection was neither as diverse nor as representative of Boston as she would have preferred, but they relied on public libraries and volunteers to gather stories and did not attempt to conduct a more scientific survey of the community. This fact was made evident in the collections. True diversity and representation of the collections depend on a
social network that bridge the academic institutions and governing bodies with neighborhoods and local residences. Outreach efforts were not conducted or were not successful in minority or underrepresented neighborhoods. Nevertheless, other organizations, such as the Interfaith Council and the Bridges and Restorative Justice projects sponsored by the University of Massachusetts, are indicative of a social infrastructure supportive of diversity. Successful integration of the stories and opinions of marginalized members of the community would suggest these organizations should have been included in the outreach conducted by NEU.

Peaker and McGrath stated their goals for long-term preservation included collaboration with Northeastern’s University archives, the Boston public libraries, the City of Boston Archives, and the NPR station, WBUR. They were also preparing to join the Digital Public Library of America, which would help host the collection, and Archive-it.org offered to ingest Our Marathon’s collections in its web archive. These institutions represent non-profit, public services (data aggregators) that foster transparency and sharing of records and metadata of all items and collections they ingest (from the data providers). The collaboration between Our Marathon, the DPLA, and Archive-it.Org is guided by the shared goal to conform to global standards and to secure digitized and Internet content for future generations (DPLA “Best Practices,” Archive-it.org “Best Practices and Standards”). Such guidelines do not address, however, preservation of local cultures and heritages.

Despite lacking representation by the Muslim and African American communities, the project depended on public outreach and the staff and managers pondered what would make a good memorial and what type of metadata needed to be customized. “Share your story” was designed using customized metadata and the public libraries provided the local venues for
gathering the stories (the libraries knew their respective communities and could best advertise and provide reassurance to the people contributing stories).

Peaker and McGrath explained the controlled vocabulary of the archive (the keywords and tags used for retrieving content) was derived from the local vernacular. The majority of the local stories collected relied on the local rhetoric (e.g. “Boston Strong”). Although the staff tried to obtain representation from interfaith communities, there were few items donated by mosques and churches. To better integrate the website with its mission, the staff hired a designer and used students from NEU to “clean up” the site. The logo adopted the colors and symbols of the BAA (Boston Athletic Association) and the site was purposively designed to be neither overly emotive nor sentimental. Peaker and McGrath agreed, “The content were powerful enough.” For six months, NEU hosted exhibits of these stories and their exhibits and presentations at the Boston City Archives and the Boston Public Library were well attended.

Peaker and McGrath believed allowing individuals to tell their stories would ameliorate grief and foster healing and recovery. The website’s aphorism, “No story is too small” reflects their philosophy. They demurred that while this wasn’t “Hallmark,” they did engage in a bit of “hand-holding” by providing guidance and follow-up interviews with the interviewees and donors. Peaker added that none of the interviewers were “objective bystanders.” Their overarching concern was to provide a just and sympathetic space for the community to record and memorialize the event. At the anniversary, Peaker and McGrath presented their project at the Cambridge Public Library (March 21st). She admitted tears were shed at this event and McGrath agreed the emotion was still “raw.” Peaker also admitted that she could not attend the first anniversary as she felt her emotions were too uncontrollable.
In spite of maintaining a global perspective regarding the outreach policies and commitment to open Internet standards (W3C), the website’s developers and content contributors present a rather homogeneous population. This is not to say that the Boston Marathon bombings were not internationally significant. Although only three people were killed and two hundred and sixty-four injured (egregious, but small in comparison to other domestic and international crimes of terrorism), the event attracted international responses and widespread media coverage. Moreover, the website attracted the attention of digital humanists, earning the 2013 “Best DH Project for Public Audiences” (“DH Awards 2013” *DH Awards*). Nevertheless, the significance of place and local identity played a greater part in the collective mourning that took place in Boston, as opposed to the nationwide mourning that occurred after the 9/11 attacks. In the section that follows, I discuss a small sampling of local opinion, reflected in my surveys of Boston residents.

*Responses to Our Marathon: Sampling Opinion through Surveys of Boston Residents and My Second Interview*

I returned to Boston in December 2014, following my June visit interviewing *Our Marathon* co-workers, Peaker and McGrath. I distributed twenty-five surveys to adults, reportedly aged 18 years or older, and who had resided in the greater Boston area during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. My nephew, Matthew Donaldson and then resident of Boston, offered to distribute the surveys to neighbors and co-workers, and Marta Crilly offered to send my online survey link to professional associates through her listserve. I also solicited survey participants from my Twitter and Facebook accounts, providing the survey link and contact information. The response was initially disappointing as only ten surveys were returned to me.
on March 21, 2016, I resubmitted my survey’s web link to my family contacts in Boston and I also posted the link on my Twitter account, requesting anyone aged 18 years or older and having lived in the greater Boston metropolis when the Marathon bombings occurred, to complete the survey. I received an additional twenty-five responses that I factored into my data. Although the 2014 and 2016 survey participants responded similarly, I observed an increase in length and self-reflection by the 2016 respondents when given open-ended questions. The survey questions directed the participants to *Our Marathon*, asking them to review features of the website and provide an assessment of the site. While the data cannot be statistically analyzed, the responses alerted me to differences and similarities in expressions of speech, emotion, and opinions between the survey participants and public submissions to *Our Marathon*.

The survey was divided into two sections. The first questioned the participants’ knowledge of the Boston Marathon Bombing, including their locations at the time of the bombing and their initial impressions. These questions were designed to establish proximity to the Boston Marathon Bombings and also to gauge preferences for or familiarity with various

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59 Had I spent more time promoting the survey, I may have obtained more returns. Instead, I focused on my interviews, including Kate Theimer (independent archivist, blogger, and editor of the text), Management: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections, and web archivists Lori Donovan and Sylvie Rollason-Cass. Theimer added authenticity to my discussions of community archives and Donovan and Rollason-Cass explained the motivations behind Archive-it.Org’s initiative to preserve *Our Marathon*’s collections. I did not include these interviews in the dissertation, however, because they were not directly relevant to my ethnographic research.

60 Few 2014 survey participants provided comments more than a sentence with the exception of one person, who wrote a diatribe of Boston’s lockdown, and another who attached a document extolling the swift efforts by city officials and local businesses to create “One Fund.” I considered these two comments representative of the diversity of opinion and indicative of the trust each respondent had in the civic power structures. The dearth of comments by the majority of the 2014 respondents may have indicated fatigue because the city had just completed a year of mourning and commemorative anniversary events at the time I submitted the surveys.
digital formats. I believed I would observe patterns between preferred means of accessing and relaying information about a crisis with the item types they selected to review. Despite the fact that the Boston Marathon occurs on the city’s holiday, “Patriot Day” (“Marathon Monday” as it is colloquially described), twenty out of thirty-five respondents reported being at work. The sources of information were roughly divided between those who learned of the news through co-workers, friends, or family through phone calls or texts, and those who received the information from TV or the Internet.

I also asked participants to describe their experiences (if any) related to the city’s lockdown. I learned from one respondent, that the vernacular term for the lockdown was “shelter in place.” Eighteen of the thirty-five participants reported being at home during the lockdown who exclusively relied on the TV for updates. This may have been due to the lockdown of cell service as well as streets and neighborhoods in the city and suburbs. At the end of section, I asked questions regarding participation in memorial services for the victims of the Marathon bombing, and if the bombing had produced any changes in daily life. Approximately half of the respondents attended a memorial service and thirty-three out of thirty-five participants commented on how their lives had changed after the Boston Marathon Bombings. As previously mentioned, the 2016 participants provided more extended reflections than the single words, phrases, or single sentence submitted by the 2014 participants. Fifteen out of the twenty-five reflections posted by the 2016 respondents consisted of two or more sentences.

In the second section of the survey, I directed the participants to the Our Marathon’s website, requesting that they select item types for review and to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement regarding those items. The statements asked participants to assess the emotional
effects of the items and state whether they believed the archive provided an accurate representation of the Boston community. I used a variety of question formats in the overall survey including: expandable text boxes for open-ended questions and opinion statements, multiple choice for selecting a variety of options, and agree/disagree questions that were designed to address specific qualities of the website. Excerpts from a completed survey follow.

**Part I - Initial Responses to the Boston Marathon Bombing, April 15, 2013**

*The following questions include fill-in response, frequency of technology use, and yes/no responses.*

1. Where were you when you found out about the Lockdown?

   I was at work and planning on leaving on a flight out of Logan later that afternoon. They called in shelter in place—not a lockdown. Some people that I spoke with were not familiar with the phrase “shelter in place.”

2. How did you find out?

   Some colleagues were monitoring on line stations and informed me that many flights have been canceled due to the situation. We were unsure what we would find when heading into the city.

3. What were your immediate impressions?

   First, how do you lock down a city? But watching the news and driving through personally—people listened—there was hardly any traffic on the roads. Some businesses closed—people were taking the directive of the lock down very seriously.

11. How has the Boston Marathon bombing changed your life?

   It hasn’t had a direct impact on my life. I feel for the people who were hurt, losing limbs—their lives were changed forever. It has impacted security at other public events that I attend—security has increased, but people understand the need. There is no way to make everywhere secure—the bombing—how would security have stopped something like this from happening?
I considered my survey participants non-experts as none had previous experience with Our Marathon or other cultural institutions documenting the Boston Marathon Bombing. By screening survey respondents who had not previously accessed Our Marathon, I expected their initial impressions of the website and its contents would differ markedly from the views and opinions of the experts, as well as offering different perspectives from the contributors. As residents of Boston, I also expected familiarity with the landmarks and believed I would see indications of civic pride. Although none of the survey participants were affiliated with Our Marathon, a survey respondent worked with legal counsel for Iron Mountain and was familiar with the network of business agencies that aided the victim’s families and survivors of the bombing. She praised the speed and partnership with which the various sponsors met and agreed to provide funds and services.

The survey participants were grouped into sub-categories including frequent social media users and frequent television watchers. Those who regularly used social media for news and communication said they were more likely to share a story or memory in the archive as opposed to those who mainly used phones for communication and television for news. In contrast to the largely positive responses, one of the respondents wrote a lengthy diatribe against the lockdown, citing confusion and the unnecessary presence of SWAT, both on the streets and on the media broadcasts. He described feelings of fear accompanied by frustration that overshadowed his feelings of sadness for the Marathon Bombing victims. This report coincided with some of the lockdown stories featured in the archive. Images of the heavily armed police were typically taken from a distance, but there was a close-up photograph of a young woman being evacuated from her home, bare footed and descending her front stoop before a policeman with a drawn gun. A
sense of alienation from the police and government during the lockdown with accounts of feeling confused and not knowing whether official reports were true or not. Marta Crilly believed exchanges between the mayor, police, and other agencies involved with Watertown may have been sequestered from entering the archive due to political and ethical concerns. Despite the painful dialogues that might ensue, she believed the diversity of perspectives would have better represented the historical truth (Crilly “Interview”).

The survey responses were generally favorable towards the website, evidenced by thirty out of thirty-three ratings of “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” responses to questions regarding the appropriateness of the site, its representation of Boston’s diverse population, and that the collections supported the archive’s mission to help heal the city. Only four out of sixteen survey participants agreed to contribute items or memories to Our Marathon, however. Two of those four also provided extensive comments regarding the Boston Marathon Bombing’s impact on their lives. One participant, who agreed to post a story online, also selected “no” to contributing content to Our Marathon. No reasons were given.

The majority of the participants had a favorable view of the website with thirty out of thirty-three respondents agreeing that the content was representative of Boston’s residents. And, eighty percent of the participants viewed the featured collections. Of these participants, approximately fifty percent selected “Boston Strong,” while another forty percent selected the city archives and the Neatline exhibit, “Messages from Copley Square.” It is plausible that these participants also perused other collections, but did not report it.
Notwithstanding the possibility of survey bias, I interpreted these findings as being somewhat more conservative in their views of the civic structures than those reflected in the narratives and texts from Our Marathon’s public submissions. I also believed the survey respondents demonstrated strong civic identity and pride, but they were also reflective and circumspect towards future acts of terrorism.

Regardless of the statistical unreliability, I was intrigued by the survey participants’ frequent use of the media during news coverage of both the bombing and the lockdown. The majority of the respondents reported checking the media “several times a day” during both crises (whether through social media or broadcast news). I realized that there had been two potentially traumatizing events that affected large populations, and that the psychological study I consulted regarding the media and the Boston Marathon bombings reported instances of posttraumatic stress syndrome in participants exposed to a high level of the bombings and lockdown media coverage (Busso, et. al. 20140. Although other psychological risk factors, like previous bouts with depression or having experienced traumatic events, may have predisposed the participants to developing PTSD, I reconsidered the types of benefits that contributing news reports and social media accounts might have on contributors to the archive. The additional layer of mediation that naturally occurs when creating the metadata and configuring the content for uploading into the website creates greater distance from live or repetitious news coverage and also engages metacognitive awareness. I wondered if this layer of mediation was similarly beneficial for contributors who had directly witnessed the bombings and had uploaded content to Our Marathon. Unfortunately, I was unable to contact Our Marathon contributors due to privacy
laws and also a certain rectitude that precluded me from seeking contact with those who had already shared their painful memories.

My second set of interviews were conducted with Marta Crilly, archivist and historian for the City of Boston Archives, and Rainey Tisdale, independent curator and instructor of museum studies at Tufts University in December 2014. They agreed to meet and discuss their respective roles and experiences archiving and curating the Boston Marathon Bombing collection and exhibit. Their respective interviews illuminated different approaches to preservation, archiving, and curating grief collections. Crilly was my first interviewee and I traveled from Boston’s network of trains and busses to the southernmost area of the city to a warehouse, which houses the City of Boston Archives and other cultural heritage collections. As with previous interviews, I preceded my visit with a list of possible questions and Marta prearranged a tour of the archive that followed our interview.

Crilly first described her background working with grief collections at the JFK Memorial Library. Her experiences with cataloging the Kennedy collections alerted her to the type of requests contemporary scholars and historians make, including the geographic locations and origins of the items and their donors (a frequent omission in the first collecting efforts of the JFK assassination). She also provided a history of the City Archives surprising me that it had only recently become a centralized institution (1989) for housing all city governmental correspondence and documentation. Prior to the centralization, the city archives were dispersed among various public agencies. Thus, it was not unusual for the Boston City Archives to hesitate creating a grief collection in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings. Several agencies and organizations, including the Boston Athletic Association and the Boston Public Library,
were intimately connected to the bombings due to their sponsorship and proximity, respectively. These organizations agreed that the City Archives would ultimately assume responsibility for documenting and preserving the collections.

She recalled the negotiations taking place during a conference call with the city’s agencies and museum representatives regarding the large grassroots memorials and described her surprise that the mayor’s office had previously decided, without informing the archivists, that the City Archives would preserve and house the memorial artifacts. Iron Mountain, a corporation that treats and preserves historic artifacts, volunteered to house most of the items retrieved from these spontaneous shrines and has continued to provide this service.

Crilly explained that the mission of the archives, however, occasionally conflicted with the purposes of a memorial and that her desire to save everything could not be done. Items that were badly damaged by the weather had to be destroyed and items that may have sparked controversy or pain in the residents and survivors were not made public. However, all of the condolence letters sent to the city were cataloged. Marta admitted that condolence letters are popular primary sources for research conducted at the JFK Memorial Library and it was interesting to learn that both Crilly and curator Rainey Tisdale were commissioned to work on the JFK collections following their respective projects on the Boston Marathon bombing collections and exhibits. Archivists consider grief collections “special collections” and although there is no direct reference to creating policies for such collections, their professional ethics emphasizes the archivist’s sensitivity and responsibility to the donor and local community (SAA “Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics”).
Crilly led me into the climate-controlled warehouse where historic documents and artifacts are stored. Stacks upon stacks of items several feet high lined the room and I followed her to an area where the BMB artifacts were stored. She retrieved boxes of runners’ bibs, police badges, sympathy cards, and drawings. Large posters and flags filled with expressions of sympathy and solidarity were rolled and sandwiched between boxes on various shelves. I looked at several items and took pictures, awed and daunted by the thought of having to go through each item and select what would be digitized and displayed for the public. Crilly explained that we were looking at a small representation of the volume of material collected from the memorials and that most of what we saw comprised the anniversary exhibit that Tisdale helped create. Crilly also said that these items had not been cataloged, but were accessible to the public as part of the grieving process. She reasoned that in time, they would be cataloged for future research.
Crilly’s expertise in curating the BMB collection was based, in part, on her masters’ degrees in history and library science, with specialties in archives and curating grief collections. She wanted to preserve and make public every item, particularly those that conveyed the historic context, even if the records sparked controversy. She avoided content that was racist and politically sensitive and showed me a letter from a London newspaper’s editorial page that
blamed Boston for indirectly causing the bombings (retribution for provoking the IRA bombings that killed several innocent citizens of London). She refrained from publishing this document and others critical of the governing offices in deference to her position as city archivist.

Crilly was also challenged emotionally by the task of gathering, preserving, and making public the scope and variety of the BMB memorial artifacts. She described the relentless news coverage that besieged her and the archival staff following the bombings and during the one-year anniversary as unnerving. Both the flood of news media and the immediate drop in interest in the days following the first anniversary provided evidence of the transitory and opportunistic status of traumatic events. Yet the convergence of Tisdale’s efforts to create an exhibit of mourning and recovery from the artifacts housed in the City’s archives, and the simultaneous transfer of items from the archives to Iron Mountain for processing and long-term storage was fortuitous and enabled Rainey to create the exhibit, “Dear Boston: Messages from the Marathon Memorial.”

I later learned that Crilly’s department was contacted immediately following the Charlie Hebdo massacres as a resource for archiving grassroots memorials. Her staff’s collaboration with French archivists, like Ann Hoog’s staff that offered assistance with archiving the Atocha Train bombing memorials in Madrid, 2004, demonstrate some of the shared practices and standards exchanged between national cultural heritage institutions of Western nations. Common practices include preservation of artifacts from vernacular shrines, cataloging these items by material type, and standardizing the metadata such that the items can be integrated and accessed within the archive. These contemporary public forms of memorializing engage ritualized behaviors, tacit rules for arrangement, and comprise a “symbolic repertoire” (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero
“Memorializing Traumatic Death”). The Boston Marathon memorials remained intact and were relatively undisturbed until their removal months after the bombing, and then only after having given notice and received the public’s approval (Crilly “Interview”).

Immediately following my interview with Crilly, I traveled on public transit to the Fornax Bakery to meet with Rainey Tisdale, independent curator. She selected Fornax because it is a small restaurant/bakery sandwiched between shops and bars of Roslindale, a south Boston suburb steeped in local tradition and camaraderie. The significance of place for constituting collective memories and tangible markers for overcoming grief is a belief and practice of Rainey Tisdale that she applied to both her exhibit designs and curriculum at Tufts University. The Fornax Bakery was not only a refuge of warmth on that snowy day; it was representative of the public—the resident neither victim nor witness to the disaster, but who nevertheless suffered from the violation of place memories associated with the Boston Marathon.

Before we greeted one another, I recognized Tisdale as she stepped into the bakery. Following the set of questions I sent her prior to my arrival, she responded with links to her blogs and a Boston Ted Talk in which she discussed her rationale for designing her exhibit, “Dear Boston: Messages from the Marathon Memorial.” I gained familiarity with her work and therefore, understood the significance of the interview location. In reaction against the preponderance of archived stories and documents featuring primarily the survivors, witnesses, first responders, and heritage workers, Tisdale sought to represent the ordinary citizen/resident whose mourning had not yet, to her mind, been adequately acknowledged. She offered an alternative to the disaster archive/memorial’s representation of community. The Fornax Bakery is a neighborhood fixture for meeting friends and associates—a place where Tisdale was well
known and from where one could easily observe and eavesdrop on conversations. Amid the occasional clattering bread machine and surrounding chatter, Tisdale impressed upon me, the significance of place memories. In urban communities, the social relationships formed at junctures where people cross or gather, shape collective memories of place. Tisdale interpreted the act of visiting and depositing objects at temporary shrines as individual narratives from which an empathic curator could select and construct a more cohesive narrative of mourning and recovery.

Tisdale explained “meaning and story” were the most important facets of her work. Her two specialties, making meaning from objects and understanding attachments to place through group memberships, were applied to her exhibit design and her website, “Boston Better”—a single portal to the Boston Marathon Bombing anniversary events. The memorial artifacts depicted the different ways residents invested in their community, whether fellow runners, spectators, or simply other Bostonians offering condolences. Rainey also explained that until her exhibit, there had not been an attempt to exhibit the city’s mourning, although Northeastern University exhibited selected items from its archive the previous October.

Boston’s history and legacies of patriotism, conflict, and competitive sports created an imagined community much larger than its geography and population would indicate. The Boston Marathon finishing line is located in front of the historic Boston Public Library on Boylston Street, midway between Exeter and Dartmouth, and near other famous landmarks including the Old South Church, Trinity Church, Boston Common, and the Boston Public Garden. Most Bostonians would have memories of Boylston Street and multiple associations with Boston’s history. Indeed, the Boston Marathon has been associated with Patriot’s Day—an official holiday
commemorating the first battles of the American Revolutionary War—since 1897. Although the deaths caused by the Boston Marathon Bombing were disproportionately small compared to the 9/11 attacks, the bombings represented for many an attack on the U.S. as evidenced by the patriotic symbols and messages that graced the memorials. The Boston Marathon bombings threatened the positive narratives of U.S. history and other associations of Boylston with what Tisdale described as this “dark thing” (Tisdale “Interview”).

Figure 30: James Schmidt, “Poster signing at Boston Marathon Copley Square memorial,” Our Marathon, accessed March 16, 2016, http://marathon.neu.edu/items/show/4215. Schmidt uploaded 96 photographs, establishing his own collection, “James Schmidt Boston Marathon Photos,” and added descriptions as well as titles for each photograph. The description for this photograph reads, “Several people leaving notes on a poster at the Boston Marathon Copley Square memorial, with bystanders looking on and taking photographs.”

Tisdale explained that she mainly worked alone because the city of Boston lacked an infrastructure of institutional support and preparation for documenting and curating
contemporary history and events. Despite the interest by separate institutions to document and preserve artifacts from the Boston Marathon Bombing (BMB), including the Boston Public Library and the City of Boston Archives, there was no coordinated effort to provide a collective space or means for mourning as a city. Tisdale did work with the city archives staff, however, to create the one-year anniversary exhibit at the Boston Public Library and also provided a blog informing the public of other anniversary events and resources (BostonBetter.org). Her exhibit, “Dear Boston,” was designed as a narrative that began with artifacts representing the initial pain and shock of the bombings, to artifacts that symbolized a place of acceptance and hope. At the end of the exhibit, people were invited to share their experiences and these reflections were hung from a tree. The exhibit lasted a few months and was later dismantled and sent to both the City of Boston Archives and Iron Mountain for preservation and future curation.

Figure 31: Christian Phillips, “Boston Better.” The photo was taken of Rainey’s exhibit at the Boston Public Library, courtesy of the photographer.

I asked Tisdale to reflect on her experience and she candidly described its emotional toll. She explained that despite her training and experience in curating grief collections and exhibits,
the BMB anniversary exhibit generated psychologically damaging effects. She sought then, and was still undergoing therapy at the time of our interview. While grateful that she was receiving therapy, Rainey hoped her work on the Boston Marathon memorial would not define or constrain her career to similar types of museum work.

Tisdale’s curatorial mission was interpreting the bombing for the public. She was critical of the minimal interpretation and random arrangement given to memorial objects and oral histories in archives of disaster and pointed out the profession’s lack of expertise and experience in processing three-dimensional objects. She also differentiated archives from museums by explaining that the archival mission is to make its contents and collections widely available, allowing the users to construct meaning without the archivist’s interpretation. Museum curators, in contrast, helped the public construct meaning through the curator’s interpretations. While careful to accept and value the diverse sub-groups that make up neighborhoods and cities, she also understood that monuments, patriot days, and other ritualized performances, like the Boston Marathon, shaped individual memories of shared places and events—the unison of collective memory and cultural identity. She incorporated a diversity of messages and asserted her exhibit was participatory and interactive.

Tisdale added her goals for the exhibit included not only providing a narrative of healing and recovery for the Boston resident, but to draw attention to the need for “empathic” museums—a trend among some museum curators to provide safe spaces for traumatized citizens.

61 Therapy continues to be freely provided by the Boston Area Trauma Recovery Network to survivors and first responders to the bombings (WBUR “Free Trauma Counseling”).
much like the public libraries of New York, the Boston Public Library, and the Ferguson Library that extended their operating hours and linked patrons to resources in the immediate aftermath of their respective crises. Tisdale’s exhibit was commendable and her consultation and collaboration with several museum networks have contributed to her esteemed reputation as a highly creative and empathic curator of exhibits at home and abroad.

Yet, the efforts by the staff and students at NEU to create an interactive, digital archive of the Boston Marathon bombings includes exhibits as well as narratives that provide meaningful engagement with the content. This is not to say that I disagree with Tisdale’s assessment of minimally curated artifacts and lost opportunities to assist the public with constructing meaningful narratives. Rather, the collections and digital tools added to Our Marathon generate narratives of mourning and civic identity.

Constructing digital memorials and archives of traumatic events whose effects continue to resonate throughout the Boston community, requires great amounts of empathy, resilience, and ethical responsibility. From my investigative research of archiving and memorializing the Boston Marathon Bombings, I identified several protocols that would nurture these characteristics in archivists and curators, and that would also facilitate the collaborative process inherent in participatory archives. These protocols can be understood as professional, psychological, and socio-technical guidelines, which I present as follows.
The archive/memorial as represented in *Our Marathon* is a hybrid of collecting and community archives\(^{62}\) that initially served the community as a digital memorial.

This convergence of archiving an event and memorializing the victims and survivors of that event challenged the conventions of objectivity and neutrality practiced by many archivists and curators, despite the common knowledge that neutrality is subject to institutional and cultural biases. Professional values and core ethics espoused by archivists, curators, and digital humanists include:

- Commitment to diversity, accomplished by including previously marginalized voices of the community, ingesting a variety of media, and respecting the cultural traditions of the donors
- Commitment to open-source platforms, ensuring future accessibility and usability of Internet-based information in perpetuity
- Adopting transparent methodologies, declaring policies and missions openly
- Collaboration with other institutions and disciplines, sharing data as donor privacy laws and ethical considerations justify

Evidence of incorporating the above values and ethics can be observed in the posted policies, mission statement, and list of sponsors and collaborators described and hyperlinked on the website.

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\(^{62}\) Laura Millar defines hybrid archives as including artifacts from both the sponsoring institution and from other “non-sponsored” institutions. Collecting archives gather content primarily for future research and community archives reflect the local “character,” and may include public and private materials (*Archives: Principles and Practices* 2010). The disaster archive/memorial shares features of each type but forms a distinct genre, based in part on its dual mission to document and memorialize a single event or type of catastrophe.
Another component of ethical responsibility is moral reasoning and having the ability to balance professional ethics (duties) with sensitivity towards the other. The archivists and curators must be sensitive to the emotional mood of their community, aware of the type of content that may incur hate or inflict psychological harm. My interviewees’ practiced quiet censorship of potentially hurtful speech by not publishing or not making visible such items. By preserving and providing limited access to these items (e.g., to researchers and scholars) they were able to balance their professional ethics with the emotional needs of their communities.

Psychological harm is a risk, as well, to the archivists and curators working with grief collections. Other recommended protocols for avoiding secondary forms of posttraumatic stress, include working with others and alternating proximity to with distance from the collections. Collaboration with other collecting institutions as well as public agencies and organizations alleviate the emotional stress of working alone. In the case of the Boston Marathon Bombings, counseling and therapy was freely offered to a wide variety of people working for organizations having some connection with the bombings. Also, busying oneself in tasks adjacent to archiving and curating, such as recording documentation or presenting the findings to the public, create cognitive as well as spatial distance from the items. As Tisdale explained, had she had more time to process the grief objects selected from the Copley Square Memorial, her risk of developing PTSD would have been diminished.

Finally, because an archive/memorial contains thousands of items that incorporate the common vernacular does not mean it represents the community. Nor does the integration of social media applications, alone, maintain public outreach and support. The social relationships at street level contribute to the socio-technical infrastructure of the archive/memorial. Inviting
local residents to volunteer at “safe” public venues for conducting outreach is a protocol practiced by Our Marathon and other disaster archives. By yielding a degree of autonomy for the neighborhood outreach organizations for gathering content helps build trust in the archive. In turn, after gathering content, the archive reconnects with the public, sharing the information gathered through exhibits or greater website accessibility. The community connections are critical and facilitating the connections through providing simple contribution templates, or offering social media links are part of the socio-technical infrastructure that defines our culture.

_A Summary of the Findings_

To review, the builders of Our Marathon recognized the significance of the Boston Marathon Bombing and that this historic moment presented opportunities concomitant with great responsibilities. The staff at Our Marathon selected the Omeka platform, based on its relative ease of use and precedent for collecting and preserving memories and digital artifacts of a catastrophic event. They offered to serve as a digital portal to like-minded civic, educational, medical, and cultural heritage institutions that were beginning to receive and store public reactions, condolences, and various artifacts honoring the victims. Our Marathon also conducted its own outreach and included the NEU faculty and students to gather content and coordinate with local agencies. A technical team of programmers and designers augmented the platform, which resulted in a more interactive site, accommodating social media content and promising long-term preservation for future research. The ethical considerations of the staff, including the protection of the donors’ privacy and the standardized metadata and controlled vocabulary used to both provide access and prevent hateful responses, are common to other disaster archives and
indicate the considerable socio-technical collaboration taking place between cities of different states and nations, united by their experiences of terrorism.

Alicia Peaker and Jim McGrath reported feeling drained at the conclusion of their work and Peaker could not attend the Boston Marathon Bombing’s anniversary services. Marta Crilly continually “adjusted” her feelings before creating the Copley Square Memorial collection. And Rainey Tisdale sought therapy for a secondary form of PTSD—a direct result from absorbing the “raw emotion” from the objects she selected for the Boston Better exhibit. At the time I conducted these interviews, I had not considered the curators and archivists of disaster collections would experience symptoms of posttraumatic stress from their work with grief collections. This discovery was a significant finding that illuminated means for resolving the ethical and emotional conflicts generated from these tasks. For Peaker and McGrath, their work with the public integrated them with the collective remembering and mourning. They were present at most exhibits and regularly assisted their staff and volunteers.

Despite the proliferation of narratives within the digital archive, an overarching narrative was present; Healing from a tragedy requires civic unity, based in competition and patriotism. You could also describe the dimensions and themes as meta-narratives, including the need to follow the rules, pledging allegiance to the nation, and the precedent set for avoiding or minimizing criticism of the city officials and police force. There were also hidden narratives, including the hegemony of scholarly use and adaptation of the archive versus the possible expansion of participation through greater crowdsourcing or participation by minority groups and organizations.
The success of *Our Marathon* is not diminished by my observation of limited participation. Nor is it undermined by the success of Tisdale’s exhibit of mourning and recovery. What this analysis has afforded, however, is the realization that archives, museums, and libraries have an expanded responsibility for balancing quasi-spiritual and psychological needs of the public against secular and political institutions. The creation of disaster archive/memorials require a realignment of policies and practices with the public at large. Disaster preparation no longer focuses primarily on the integrity of the collections, but on the anticipated psychological and physical needs of its community. Moreover, the willingness to provide the public narratives, meaningful stories created from the contents, such as Tisdale’s exhibit, or the exhibits and extensive description offered in *Our Marathon*, are integral to making sense of our disasters and life in a trauma culture.

In Chapter 8, I present visualizations of my research findings and explain how these are incorporated into my Omeka prototype. I also condense my findings and the protocols described above and suggest a “Best Practices” for designing disaster archives. Finally, I reflect on the implications of my research and discuss possible alternatives for conducting future study of disaster archive/memorials.
CHAPTER 8: PROTOCOLS AND POETICS FOR THE DISASTER ARCHIVE

“Collaborative systems are dialogic spaces in which the acts of writing, imaging, storytelling, and political statement are a collective production, a process rooted in social interaction and dialogue that produces a narrative without authorial consistency.”

Sharon Daniel, “The Database: An Aesthetics of Dignity”

My research findings corresponded with much of what Daniel ascribes to databases. I discovered that the digital disaster archive provides a civic space for collective remembering and mourning. This civic space is a social, technical interface for conducting communications between the general public and the cultural heritage sponsors and builders of the archive. The disaster archive is not dialogic, however, in the sense that public interaction with the archive agents (be they donors, organizers, or other site visitors) yields discovery of truth and meaning. Although the archivists, curators, and developers of a disaster archive engage in highly collaborative and coordinated planning that often leads to innovative policies and best practices, the collection donors and site visitors are rarely participants in the more powerful role of designing policy.

Nevertheless, crowdsourced collections are products of social interaction (negotiation), created for the purpose of sharing and distributing memories and, likely, previously distributed through social media. It remains to be seen whether disaster archive/memorials will become
more dialogic in the same way that the prisoner storytelling projects and website constructions by heroin addicts developed from Daniel’s guidance (“The Database”). From my investigation, I encountered narratives punctuated by themes of innocence, pride, and resilience, which in a different context may have encouraged dialogue. Perhaps the best evidence for describing disaster archives as collaborative systems that provide the dialogic spaces, is in the documentation of the archive’s creation. Traumatic events that wreak destruction on entire communities activate cultural responses, bringing together archivists, curators, and software developers like international cadres of first responders offering their skills and knowledge with communities in need.

In this final chapter, I reprise my research questions and reflect on my findings and methods of analysis. Following this rationalization, I present a list of protocols and best practices distilled from my field research and content analyses. At the conclusion, I consider the implications of the digital disaster archive’s database structure and its myriad of formats and inputs for witnessing and responding to a community’s crisis.

Not surprising, my research revealed the disaster archive is characterized by contradictions. The purported healing and catharsis experienced by those who contribute their

63 Lesson plans or student-centered research projects such as those provided on the NS11MM website, Our Marathon, the “September 11 Documentary Project,” and UC QuakeStudies, provide examples for sponsoring structured debate and critical analysis of the respective disasters.

64 Collaboration and consultation between cultural heritage institutions of different nations cited in this study include the Japanese Digital Archive (Harvard University and the September 11 Digital Archive), Spain’s “El archivo del duelo” (consulted the Library of Congress), and New Zealand’s QuakeStudies (consulted the September 11 Digital Archive). Additional collaborations developed between Archive-it.Org and the JAD and Our Marathon, the Pan AM Lockerbie Archives and Oklahoma City’s Memorial, Virginia Tech’s April 16th Archive and Our Marathon, and Oklahoma City’s Memorial and the National September 11 Memorial/Museum.
stories may simultaneously put those receiving and cataloging these items (oral historians and museum curators, for example) at psychological risk. Additionally, the regenerative civic or national identity promoted by the community-based disaster archive may ironically perpetuate the isolation of those not represented in the archive. These two examples of the contradictory nature of the disaster archive are consistent with more recent studies of disaster archives (Maynor “Response to the Unthinkable,” regarding psychological risks for archivists and curators, and Tait, et. al. “Linking to the Past,” working with heterogeneous and competing groups within communities). Yet my research provides evidence of resilience in cultural heritage workers and their willingness to expand public participation. The long-term preservation of the archive is as much a matter of its future relevance to the community as it is for the storage and ongoing maintenance of its technologies. Thus far, educational applications and digital tools, such as K-12 lesson plans, student-created exhibits of the items, or interactive timelines and annotated photographs, complement the archival missions. What remains to be seen is whether the disaster archive/memorials will ever inspire the type of political debate or cries for justice that makeshift memorials and physical monuments inspire.

A Critical Review of the Key Findings

My research aimed to examine these complicated functions and missions of participatory disaster archives, and to determine the significance of the public’s participation. To guide this research, I posed the following research questions:

1. How are the digitization and archiving of media and communications influencing the collective memories and ritual acts of mourning?

2. Are we living in a trauma culture?
3. How does user-participation contribute both an aesthetic and ethic for disaster archiving?

As explained in Chapter 2, “monumentalizing” is a term used by Eric Ketelaar to describe the shift from valuing something for its immediate functionality to valuing something because it is historic and no longer merely functional. It also signals the early modern era and the establishment of national archives, and the rising popularity of museums and historic statues in city squares. Memorializing, on the other hand, refers to conventions of mourning, including online formats that also archive oral histories and various documents and ephemera used to commemorate and mourn deaths and tragedies. How these functions converge in the disaster archive and why this convergence is significant for developing a participatory disaster archive are critical issues addressed by the following research questions and findings.

*How are the digitization and archiving of media and communications influencing the collective memories and ritual acts of mourning?*

In this question, I assumed the culture of online commerce and social networking would converge with the missions of digital archives to collect a vast and diverse array of public opinion. From this assumption, I believed the collective memories and rituals of mourning would somehow be shaped by the disaster archive. The question should have been posed in reverse order, however. While digitization has certainly accelerated the postcolonial and post-Holocaust interest by archivists to ingest the memories and artifacts of repressed and marginalized members of the population, the digital, disaster archive does not, exclusively, shape memories. Collections of memories produced through digital devices and previously disseminated through social media networks, are preserved and archived through the device’s embedded metadata, and also archived by the media networks. Social media or corporate news media networks use their
archives to shape collective memory of people and events. They attach ritualized remembering, for example, by exhibiting montages of imagery from the archives on anniversaries of the disastrous event.

Moreover, the collections of digital disaster archives typically feature social media content and other artifacts previously disseminated through mass networks. The rituals of mourning developed at locations of the disaster, or at sites known for their heritage and collective memories, include street shrines and spontaneous performances. The ephemera produced at these public grief sites are taken or captured by camera to be preserved in the archive. The public mourning that inspires temporary, makeshift memorials at sites of disaster (or places of public congregation), has generated new policies and procedures for archivists and curators building digital grief collections (E.g., encouraging the public to describe and tag their donated ephemera, as opposed to relying on archive traditions).

Nevertheless, my research has illuminated technical features and curatorial policies of disaster archive/memorials that modify and interpret the collections of memories. Templates with guided questions for relating a story or describing an artifact are pedagogical tools as well as archival tools for generating metadata and ensuring accessibility and long-term preservation. For example, in Our Marathon, the open-ended questions for soliciting descriptions begin with the phrase, “Tell us about…” but vary in complexity according to whether the item is text-based or image-based. Text-based items include stories, emails, text messages, and audio recordings. The templates for these types include spaces for additional reflection, following such questions as “Would you like to tell us more…?” or adding an optional box, “Description,” that follows the text of the story. This optional and extended space for continued expression requires deeper
thought and provides additional perspective and detail. Images and videos, conversely, have but one question and designated space for describing the item, “Tell us about,” an option rarely filled.

Despite the absence of an overarching narrative, intimated by the seemingly random and wildly diverse contents, there are often underlying narratives, such as the belief in the therapeutic value of narrating one’s story, or the affirmation of a strong and resilient community that pulls together when attacked by an outside threat. I discerned and interpreted these hidden narratives from the mission statements and collection descriptions. Excerpts from mission statement that imply therapeutic value for the contributors include, “We invite you to help mend and strengthen the fabric of our community by contributing your stories and media from the week of April 15 in Boston” (Our Marathon), and “From EQC to the Cathedral debate, from street art to shipping containers, our lives have changed in ways both big and small. It is important to us that we represent the myriad of experiences, voices and attitudes, including the controversies and disagreements” (UC QuakeStudies). The narrative of resilience through strong civic identity is also evident in the frequent use of the plural pronouns, “we,” “our,” and “your” evidenced in the mission statements cited above.

The effects of digitization on rituals of mourning are more pronounced in cybermemorials, as discussed in Chapter 5. Cybermemorials of catastrophic events that permit public comments or submissions of digital artifacts to individual or group memorial pages (like those sponsored by Legacy.com or Cantor Fitzgerald), encourage extended mourning in keeping with other commercially sponsored social networking sites. The casual site visitor can participate as a mourner and join the network so to speak, given the cybermemorial policies. Social
networking applications, e-commerce websites, and cybermemorials use similar structures and symbols for eliciting user participation and maintaining a community of users. On an individual’s online memorial there may be an array of emoticons, social media links, spaces for comments or uploaded media, and links for purchasing merchandise. The digital archive/memorial, conversely, depends on more ground-level, face-to-face networking and inter-agency collaboration to sustain its socio-technical platform. This does not mean that disaster archive/memorial site visitors cannot experience grief or become inspired to send condolences to the community, but the trend for establishing new social networks of fellow mourners in online memorials is not evident in disaster archive/memorials. On the other hand, the profusion of grief narratives and artifacts in the digital archive/memorial, which are displayed without hierarchy or outsider comments, present a model of mourning that individualizes grief. For national, public heritage institutions, individualizing grief as opposed to collectivizing memory through interpretative narratives, has been evident since the late 20th century (Doss “Death, art and memory in the public sphere”). In some cases, such as the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, the absence of patriotic symbolism and presence of individual names foregrounded the sacrifices of war. Similarly, the individual deaths caused by the 9/11 terror attacks are inscribed at the September 11 Memorial, presented inside the memorial, and also accessible from the digital kiosks, representing the individuals as heroes and martyrs. Their deaths are collectively remembered as sacrifices for the tenets of freedom, security, and safety, threatened by acts of terror. Other digital archive/memorials, including the April 16th memorial collections at Virginia Tech, the Oklahoma City Memorial/Museum, and the Pan Am Flight 103/Lockerbie Air Disaster
Archives memorialize the victims of these respective tragedies, while relating their sacrificial deaths to larger threats of random violence or plotted terrorist attacks.

Are we living in a trauma culture?

To begin, I defined trauma culture as a society in which an unknown number of its members suffer from varying degrees of posttraumatic stress disorders, and in which an economy of medical diagnoses, treatments, and popular culture is sustained by trauma. This definition was broad enough that I could include psychological and cultural dimensions in my analysis of disaster archive/memorials. Yet, it was too broad a question to answer directly and served rather to illuminate the connotations of “living in a trauma culture.” Examples of trauma “culture,” include themes in popular literature and media that present dystopian worlds, like Cormac McCarthy’s The Road, and news media coverage of addiction or gun violence. As one terrorist attack is rapidly replaced by another, and as spontaneous shrines and memorials quickly follow and disappear, we are presented with such tropes as the belief that terror strikes from the outside, randomly and without warning, and people who survive develop inner strength and resilience. An overwhelming number of my survey responses and narratives submitted to several disaster archive collections reflected these tropes as excerpted below.

“The senseless act of violence toward so many innocent people bothers me on a very deep level. I do not take things for granted any more” (Survey participant #35).

“We have decided to run together and despite having a year to train our hearts aren't in it
We know we have to run for all that "Boston Strong" represents but we know it will be tough. We are so fortunate that we can run thus we will” (Casarano “Oral History,” *Our Marathon*).

Essential findings from my research supported the literature\(^{65}\) that included factors increasing or reducing the risk of developing posttraumatic stress symptoms. Factors that increased risk included physical proximity to the event when it occurred, previous experience with PTSD or depression, and prior experience of living through a similar disaster. To reduce these risks, the literature provides evidence of a strong social infrastructure that included access to governing agencies and an absence of history of depression or PTSD. My interviews and survey data also revealed greater instances of resilience and recovery than suffering from symptoms of PTSD.

I discovered through my interviews and surveys that archivists, curators, and project directors suffered a significant amount of depression and traumatic memories during their work in the disaster archives. This corresponds to the intensity and duration of exposure that first hand witnesses suffer. At the same time, each professional interviewed had worked through, or was in the process of working through, their respective grief and trauma, thereby evidencing the resilience and recovery reported by the contributors. For both contributor and archive “processor” the acts of collecting memories, documenting the memorials, and sharing these items

\(^{65}\) To understand the emotional and cognitive effects of trauma, I reviewed the literature on posttraumatic stress syndrome, which studied survivors of widespread traumatic events including 9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing. I included critical studies of popular culture and media that reflected the lingering effects of PTSD on individuals and communities ((Charuvastra and Cloitre, Galea, et. al., McFarlane and Williams). I also reviewed literature on the emergence of posttraumatic growth in response to widespread disasters that revealed positive effects, such as spiritual or emotional healing and increased resilience (Berger Stress, Trauma, and Posttraumatic Growth, Bonanno, McFarlane and Williams).
with others are all “works of mourning,” prompted in part by a sense of ethical responsibility and moral duty.

On the other hand, what I may interpret as catharsis or resilience may actually be indicative of the social and technological effects of regularly participating in social media networks or of the unique affordances each type of medium provides. Truncated speech in a Tweet or Facebook entry favor emotional or iconic responses, whereas digital audio recorders encourage more composed narratives. Although the medium does not entirely shape the message, it is important to remember their powerful effects before assuming the content at face value. Memes or mash-ups of “Boston Strong” may include ironic or critical opinion, whereas displays of “Boston Strong” posters at makeshift memorials rally team spirit and civic solidarity.

*How does user-participation contribute both an ethic and aesthetic for disaster archiving?*

My third question was largely informed by the prosumer ethos discussed by Henry Jenkins and the aesthetics of the database as interpreted by Sharon Daniel. Prior to my investigative research and analyses of selected archive/memorials, I underestimated the role that ethical responsibility or moral judgment would have in producing digital archive/memorials. Rather, I assumed the work of mourning and perhaps political protest would motivate the public to participate in building the collections. What I discovered were indicators of professional ethics and moral duty in the mission statements, narratives, interviews, and survey respondents. From these indices, I construed a dimension of ethical responsibility that included all participants (actors and agencies). What I could not surmise, however, was what motivated the casual site visitor and whether an ethical responsibility or sense of moral judgment would be activated. In
other words, the prosumer ethos was somewhat lacking in evidence because site visitors cannot add to, or effect, changes within the archive/memorial “system.” Had the disaster archives I reviewed permitted public (outsider) commenting, tagging, or editing content, would this added dialogue have fostered greater hurt or greater insight? There are psychological and professional risks and ethical responsibilities that intersect in crowdsourced, participatory archives.

The underlying logic or aesthetic of the disaster archive/memorial is a system of naming and sorting, arranging and navigating, and quick scanning and refreshing objects on “pages.” The aesthetics of a database, referred to in the epigraph and described at length by Lev Manovich, are understood to be combinations of the site’s functionality, its organization and classifications, and user interactivity. It is not enough, however, to suggest that attractive and variable means for engaging with the contents of digital archives produce “ethical” or “aesthetic” experiences for site visitors. User participation does not have to be merely accessing content or interpreting the items as transparent windows to the trauma. Daniel proposes an “aesthetics of dignity” that would address the user-participant’s material and social conditions and incorporate greater outreach to the under-represented. She suggests granting the participants control over the “naming and classification of data,” and becoming “co-designers and creators” of such platforms.

Is this not what crowdsourced, digital archive/memorials do? With qualifications, the answer is yes. The archive/memorial ingests different social and political opinions regarding the terrorist disaster in addition to expressions of comfort and solidarity. Moreover, many institutions develop tags and controlled vocabulary directly from the vernacular used by the contributors to narrate or describe the donated items. But, as Sheila Brennan observed regarding the creation of
The Hurricane Memory Bank, disallowing the public’s ability to add tags or comment upon the artifacts, directly, is limiting the participatory ethos of Web 2.0. I believe the archive/memorials should facilitate greater participation, which in turn would establish more meaningful connections with the contents. They could do this by enabling users to create exhibits, stories, or other poetic forms derived from the archive.

My research complements previous investigations of disaster archives, digital memorials, and database aesthetics, but it also presents psychological and ethical dimensions of archiving that until recently have been overlooked. One exception can be found in Timothy Recuber’s analyses of the narratives in the September 11 Digital Archive and the Hurricane Memory Bank, respectively. Recuber believes the prosumer ethos (public participation in online venues, whether for profit or not, that enable individual types of expression and ideas) drives the idiosyncratic and individualistic contributions to online archives. These genres “sidestep some of the political questions about the representation of disasters within collective memory” because the public is determining what is politically appropriate, ethical, and worth preserving. He assumes the public contributions are diverse and do not represent an overarching narrative, thereby diffusing any potential political debate of the messages or manner of commemoration.

Yet, I saw evidence of political and cultural cohesion, which I indexed from my analysis of narratives and mission statements as “subjective identity.” Although there were other narratives,

66 Scholars and researchers in the archiving field most frequently consulted include Terry Cook, Laura Millar, Eric Ketelaar, and Margaret Hedstrom. Referenced works on digital memorials include texts by Erika Doss, Timothy Recuber, E. Johanna Hartelius, and Gregory Ulmer. While many of these scholars also address the aesthetics of the archive/memorials, I primarily consulted works by Sharon Daniel, Ann Cvetovich, and Lev Manovich. These works are listed in the References section.
they were harder to locate. The tags and vocabulary may be idiosyncratic and reflect a prosumer ethos, but they are not typically the first means of accessing the contents. The featured collections and exhibits were the first items selected according to my survey and these consistently supported the mission statements (e.g., affirming the solidarity and strength of community, admiration for police and firefighters, and comparisons made to other anti-Western terrorist attacks).

**Best Practices and Protocols**

As evidenced by my research, librarians, museum curators, and archivists increasingly provide safe havens for citizens and visitors in the aftermath of a disaster. Through extended hours, adjustments to curatorial policies, and crowdsourcing materials for the archives and museum exhibits, these cultural heritage experts provide the spaces and resources for traumatized communities to collectively mourn and reflect on their grief. Each of my interviewees had face-to-face contact with the witnesses and memorial artifacts, and each rationalized their curatorial policies, citing moral duty, professional ethics, or a future of possibilities.

The following best practices are culled from the lessons learned from my interviewees’ and the protocols documented in the disaster archives I reviewed. The list is not proscriptive in the sense that negative consequences would result from not implementing these protocols. Nor, is it prescriptive, in the belief that positive outcomes will surely result when following these practices. They do, however, reflect dimensions of ethical responsibility, missions of healing and recovery, and possibilities for future innovation in digital disaster archives and memorials.
Establishing a Mission

The disaster archive/memorial’s mission statement (sometimes distinguished by an “About” page) sets forth the purpose and aspirations of the archive’s sponsoring institutions. I parsed the mission statements or about pages to isolate words, phrases, or metaphors, drilling down so to speak into the language, seeking underlying themes and patterns. From the verbal content I abstracted various dimensions, such as the site creators’ perspectives, authority, and expectations of the audience. Despite the subjectivity and bias of my content analyses, I understood that the mission statements would be useful for my critical assessments. Initially, I believed a digital disaster archive or memorial that performed as its mission statement proclaimed, and whose contents would remain accessible and useful for future audiences, were indicators of success. In retrospect, I realize the mission statement, like the contents and applications within, may evolve, or become subsumed by a web archive with a different overarching mission. The value of the mission statement for present designers and users is that it establishes a focus and an expectation of what can be learned or discovered. Disaster archives are also collecting and community archives that depend on public participation, as both producers and consumers. Hence, a best practice for mission statements would include acknowledging the value of public participation and providing easily accessed links and simple platforms for contributing to or interacting with the site.

Another best practice for developing mission statements that could be adapted for future uses is to propose more than one possible mission, or to invite exploration and creative invention with the archive’s contents. Our Marathon presents its mission as a central place for sharing grief and recovery, and also as a rich resource for future students, scholars, and historians. Of
course, the representatives of the sponsoring institutions write the mission statements and as evidenced by the *National September 11 Memorial/Museum* and UC Canterbury, New Zealand’s archive/memorial, *QuakeStudies* and *QuakeStories*, there may be multiple mission statements written by the semi-autonomous collaborating agencies or smaller institutions. Nevertheless, an overarching mission statement or “About” page unifies the disparate collections into a collective purpose.

*Establishing a Centralized Portal*

Cultural heritage institutions, including libraries, archives, and museums, and memorials have long provided centralized locations for gathering the public and providing venues for remembrances. Digital archive/memorials also provide centralized portals that aggregate the collections and missions of many of these cultural heritage institutions. To establish a centralized portal that also accommodates the needs of individual residents while amassing the resources of multiple agencies, a high degree of collaboration and communication between such agents and agencies is necessary. At the outset, a best practice should include assessing the resources of the institution and neighboring institutions, agencies, and organizations are vital for gaining trust and support.

Secondly, institutions with the technical resources for developing and sustaining a platform, adequate for ingesting large collections of various formats and integrating collections from different organizations, should host the archive using open-source software. Large museums and national libraries and archives, like *QuakeStudies* and the *National September 11 Memorial/Museum (NS11MM)*, use Drupal or a similar type of robust, open-source software for
accommodating multiple collections and irregular metadata from outside sources. Initially, many sponsoring institutions “seed” their collections, which means archival staff contribute content to generate samples or models for the general public. The sponsoring institution may also set policies for standardized metadata or provide templates for uploading content. This was more often the case with the disaster archive/memorials I reviewed, with the exception of QuakeStudies, which encouraged its smaller institutional partners to retain their own policies, and the NS11MM, which modified its metadata and software for specific collections, such as the “Artists Registries.”

**Inter-agency, Interstate, and International Collaboration**

Establishing social networks among the cultural heritage workers, civic and mental health organizations, neighborhood centers, schools, and churches is not only a best practice for gaining local trust and sharing responsibility, but it is also critical for the resilience and recovery from a widespread disaster. Each disaster archive/memorial I researched had initiated outreach into their respective communities through local residents and volunteers. Interagency types of collaboration are the most common and critical, perhaps, for disaster archive/memorials. Our Marathon’s partner and NPR station, WBUR, hired an oral historian and produced several oral histories with the technical assistance and volunteer staff from Northeastern University. The City of Boston Archives and Iron Mountain also partnered with Northeastern, sharing the cleaned and digitized artifacts from the temporary memorials and condolence letters sent to the mayor’s office. While word of mouth is still a common practice for attracting contributors, as Jenny Pachucki reported regarding the “Oral Remembrances” collection of the NS11MM, collaborating
agencies are like cultural first responders, intimately connected with the communities they represent.

As discovered through my research, the social network of ground-level organizations and institutions, including health care agencies, educational institutions, civic organizations, and local museums, libraries, and archives, are separate entities that in a time of crisis are not always prepared to work together, as Rainey Tisdale described Boston immediately following the Marathon Bombings (Tisdale “Interview”). Since the Pan Am Lockerbie Disaster and the creation by Syracuse University of a disaster archive, the Oklahoma City Bombing, and of course, the September 11 attacks, coordination between state, local, and national disaster archives have established precedents and guidelines for creating centralized, digital portals. I footnoted in this chapter’s first page, examples of collaboration between the archivists and curators experienced in the work of archiving memorials and public responses to catastrophic events. Marta Crilly of the City of Boston Archives explained her department’s work on the Boston Marathon Bombing archives had attracted international attention. She was contacted by the Australian National Archives after the 2014 hostage crisis and by a French Archives journal following the Charlie Hebdo attacks, each seeking consultation regarding the archiving of their respective disasters (Crilly “Re: Follow-up Interview”). Collaboration between interdisciplinary fields and organizations is a best practice grounded in the values and core ethics shared by archivists, digital humanists, and museum curators.67

67 Lisa Spiro offers a set of values for digital humanists, of which “openness,” and the belief in the “wisdom of the crowd” is valued. These principles exemplify both Internet culture and humanistic traditions (“Defining the Digital Humanities”). The Society of American Archivists and the American Alliance of Museums also adhere to similar
In conjunction with interagency and international collaborations, this best practice corresponds to the technical standards for open source platforms in which openess refers to the accessibility and interoperability of an international medley of socio-technological systems and hardware. Collaboration as a best practice extends across disciplines, languages, and nations.

**Crowdsourcing and Co-authorship**

Another set of best practices associated with participatory archives pertains to public submissions and co-authoring of content. Crowdsourcing is a means for obtaining information and content from the general public, but the extent of authorship is variable. As Ann Hoog of the Library of Congress explained, the crowdsourced materials for the “September 11 Documentary Project” arrived from local and regional centers that in turn submitted them to the Library of Congress (Hoog “Interview”). During the same time frame (late 2001 to 2002), the *September 11 Digital Archive* received born digital artifacts submitted by the public and established a precedent for digital history collections and disaster archives (Brennan “Legacy of the September 11 Digital Archive”). Although these forerunners each applied their disciplinary practices, including development of traditional finding aids by the former and assigning very basic metadata and minimal curation by the latter, they nevertheless had to invent categories and policies for their archives.

There are good reasons for placing controls on crowdsourcing. By requiring basic, standard metadata fields supplied by humans, but supplemented with machine generated professional ethics, and post their respective “Code of Ethics” and “Best Practices” on their websites, each emphasizing service to the public.
metadata, the archive provides a layer of interpretation as well as enabling accessibility across various technologies. Contributors supply the human generated metadata when provided guides or templates for uploading content, whereas locations, dates, and other types of embedded metadata may be provided without human input. Additional controls include disallowing comments or tagging by the general site visitor, a means for deflecting spam or avoiding hateful content that would undermine a mission of community healing and solidarity.

A corollary of this best practice is protecting the privacy and intellectual property of the donor. The contributor should decide whether the content will be made publicly visible or accessible and the site should disclaim ownership of the specific items. Donors should also provide the descriptors or tags for the donated items through the available metadata fields, if so desired. These negotiations form the basis of co-authorship in the archive/memorials I reviewed. Although other types of archives may yield greater control over the creation of metadata policies and representations of the items to its donors (such as aboriginal archives created by tribal authorities), best practices for crowdsourced disaster archives support co-authorship of the controlled vocabulary and complete ownership of the intellectual content by the creator/donor.

*Training and Education for Volunteers, Staff, Students, and the Public*

Gathering and ingesting oral histories, artifacts, and other types of “grief” documents from the public should obviously not be exploited by breaching the donor’s privacy, for example. Co-authorship between the institution and the public helps prevent such possibilities. To ensure trust by the donor community, added best practices include training in sensitivity and diversity awareness, and coordinating outreach activities between different agencies and organizations.
serving the same populations. By using local residents deemed knowledgeable and trustworthy by their peers, and selecting familiar public venues, such as local libraries, for gathering and recording, the project coordinators are providing a just and sympathetic space for collecting content. Moreover, teaching residents and volunteers (non-experts in archiving) skills in interviewing, recording, and creating metadata is another means for building resilience.68

An emerging best practice associated with participatory, disaster archives is the development of education platforms and activities that promote critical reflection and interpretation. The “September 11 Documentary Project,” the NS11MM, the Oklahoma City Memorial/Museum, Our Marathon, and the Digital Archive of Japan’s 2011 Disasters (JDA) each provide site visitors educational lessons and digital tools for more in-depth engagement with the archived collections. By enabling users to construct meaning from the contents without didacticism69, the archive attenuates its restriction against public tagging or commenting on the items and collections.

Archives that permit the public to create and display exhibits, digital stories, or other creative applications derived from the archive’s contents are fostering digital literacy (developing and acquiring skills in creating and interpreting digital content), and perhaps, a

68 Carl Lindahl’s work with New Orleans’ residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and local townspeople in Haiti after the earthquake, focused on teaching them methods of oral history collection, digital storytelling, and archiving their gathered evidence. As his “students” gained skills and confidence, their command and direction of these historical narrative projects transferred into greater autonomy and financial reward from their respective communities (“Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston” and “Sivivan pou Sivivan,” respectively).

69 Avoiding didacticism, on the other hand, should not be construed as not taking a moral or ethical position regarding the outcome of the disaster. Of the disaster archive/memorials cited above, the NS11MM includes Socratic debates and redesigning museum exhibits as lessons to engage ethical and moral decision-making.
means for citizen activism. The JDA presents its site visitors with several options for participating in and contributing content to the archive, and offers a constructivist model of education. The digital storytelling application, “Waku,” and the curator tool, “JDA Bookmarklet,” encourage the public (not just students and educators) to select items from the archive and generate new media products. The Oklahoma City Memorial/Museum, the NS11MM, and Our Marathon also provide digital tools for augmenting cognitive engagement with their respective archived contents. Unlike the JDA, these archive/memorials do not enable site visitors to upload or share curated exhibits unless they are members of a partner institution. However, each archive/memorial provides a variety of digital tools for in-depth exploration, including interactive timelines (NS11MM and Our Marathon), annotated images (NS11MM and Our Marathon), and mobile apps with various features such as virtual tours (Oklahoma City Memorial/Museum, NS11MM).

Can digital disaster archive/memorials do more, however, to help their communities engage in citizen activism or restorative justice? Jim McGrath, former project co-director of Our Marathon, succinctly described this best practice as “Gather the content,” “connect with the community,” and “work with the content” (McGrath “Interview”). Rainey Tisdale advocates speaking “up” to the audience when designing exhibits and implores curators to not underestimate the public or shy from difficult subjects. Rather, she advises developing exhibits that encourage reflective thinking and promote positive social action. In other words, libraries, museums, and archives are positioned to help the public interpret and make sense of tragedy by virtue of their educational missions. Their tools consist of finding aids and classification
schemes, templates for donors, exhibits, and innovative, interactive digital tools. As Barry Mauer has observed,

“A good archivist provides material that artists would not or could not have found by themselves. Furthermore, archivists provide perspectives on this material that throw new light on it. The archivist presents historical patterns to artists that they come to learn as ‘traditions.’ Additionally, the archivist demands that artists answer the question ‘what next?’ for themselves” (“Electronic Archival Practices”).

Although Mauer is referring to the remixing and remediating of archival content to create new mediums of expression, his premise that the archivist provide a history of perspective and form that simultaneously encourages experimentation is applicable to the disaster archive/memorial and its potential for educational and social reform. Encouraging the public to create from or comment upon the items and collections of a disaster archive could lead to increased social capital, particularly in digital art forms that foster irony or parody, such as memes and mash-ups. And while there is potential for hateful repurposing of the contents, such “work with the contents” is an antidote to passive consumption.

Ethical Decision making

Ethical responsibility for responding to a crisis in a timely and sensitive manner has only recently been included in the core values and ethics of museum workers and archivists (see footnote on page 14.) Nevertheless, according to my interviewees, each wrestled with balancing their emotional needs with their professional ethics, and balancing their professional ethics with the emotional needs of their communities. A recommended best practice for creators of disaster archives and memorials is to infuse their decision making with ethical and moral judgment.
It was evident from my interviews and research of other disaster archives that applying ethical or moral judgment is not a contentious issue and was, indeed, unanimously practiced. I distinguished ethics from moral judgment by examining decisions made according to disciplinary practices and institutional traditions on the one hand, and those ascribed to one’s sense of right and wrong. Professional standards and institutional missions primarily prescribe ethical decision making, whereas moral judgment draws from deeper, cultural, religious, or secular values that recognize there are differences between good and evil. I suggest ethical decision making because codes of ethics and core values provide the rational counterpart to an otherwise intensely emotional and often politicized task. Marta Crilly observed that her greatest challenge was offsetting her desire to document, preserve, and publish the historic record (with all its “ugliness”) against the political pressures of city government, and the sensitivities of the community (Crilly “Interview”). Alicia Peaker and Jim McGrath also admitted to censoring some of the letters containing racial and ethnic epithets.

Occasionally moral judgment supersedes professional ethics. Alex Drukakis complained of museum visitors needing to “touch” everything and Crilly complained of the documentary camera crew’s “sensationalizing” of the Boston Marathon Memorial artifacts (Drukakis “Interview,” and Crilly “Re: Follow-up Interview”). Tisdale averred that in order for everyday Bostonians to make sense of and recover from the bombings, they needed a narrative—a story told with objects that would lead them on a trajectory from trauma to recovery. In contrast to the NS11MM curators I interviewed, Tisdale championed her style of storytelling as therapeutic and necessary. In these cases, a recommended best practice would suggest awareness of one’s professional ethics, biases, and sense of morality. By explaining one’s rationale for designing
exhibits or policies, the decision making methodology is made transparent, and therefore, evidences ethical (and perhaps, moral) responsibility.

**Aesthetics of Design and Function**

The aesthetics of a disaster archive/memorial is the synthesis of design and function. The interface, with its layout and balance of color, shape, and textual elements correspond to artistic elements of design and composition, but the interface is dynamic and functional. The aesthetics of the digital archive become realized through the graphical interface that orients the visitor, illuminates navigation tools and paths of direction, and that also maintains a certain consistency of design and organizers to help make the site more comprehensible. Recommended best practices include using the graphic design elements of white space, size and color of fonts, headings, icons, and images to create a site homologous with its mission. The missions of both the “September 11 Documentary Project” and the *September 11 Digital Archive* focused on regional and diverse public responses to the September 11 attacks. They conveyed unity among diversity through their respective site’s layout, including a slide show of images, depicting unique item types and subject matter. The juxtaposition of the elements, of course, produce meaningful assumptions, but they are discreetly left to the viewer’s interpretation.

In addition to creating a design homologous with the archive’s mission, another recommended best practice is establishing consistency in page design, search functions, and metadata. Although consistency in design and function may be initially controlled by the software platform, as in the case of using Omeka “right out of the box,” standardized tools, banners, and metadata may also be modified to suit the community and mission of the site. As
explained by Alicia Peaker regarding *Our Marathon*’s platform and design, the simplicity and relative banality of the site’s colors, as well as the constancy of the menu’s appearance, provide an unobtrusive interface to content that she and her staff considered would be “emotional enough” (Peaker “Interview”).

Finally, there should be clarity and variety in the search methods for retrieving items. Searchability is a recommended best practice as well as standard feature of digital archives. As a best practice the disaster archive/memorial should facilitate searching by keyword, tags, collections, item types, and other descriptors or combinations thereof. Once retrieved, the items’ relationships (collection, item type, tags, etc.) should be readily apparent and easily cross-referenced. Given that the overarching aesthetic of the disaster archive/memorial is the connecting and integrating collections of memories and images of a community in mourning, searching should reveal relationships as well as objects.

*Risk Management and Future Forecasts*

Based on my interviewees’ reports of posttraumatic stress or depression as a consequence of working with grief materials, and my own emotions and fatigue after immersion in the disaster archive collections, I recommend a best practice of sharing and distributing the curatorial tasks among colleagues. Although each interviewee had worked through or was in the process of working through work-related psychological stress, the cultural heritage worker is not typically recognized as being at risk for developing PTSD. Yet, many disaster archives include links to mental health and wellness center resources. While these resources may appear to be directed
mainly to the community at large, the curatorial workers are also members of that community and at equal, if not greater risk than most of the general public.

Future forecast refers to research into the causes and effects of naturally caused and man-made disasters and preparations being made in anticipation of future disasters. For example, *QuakeStudies* sponsors scientific research in earthquakes while also featuring restoration services for rebuilding cultural heritage sites (*UC QuakeStudies*). The *Virginia Tech April 16, 2007, Archives of the University Libraries* hosts government reports and resources from the university’s “Office of Recovery and Support,” while maintaining the digital memorials and archived collections of the April 16th campus shootings. The digital library and archives of VT thus serves as a portal to historic documentation, memorialization, and ongoing research in campus violence. While preparation for future disaster might evidence living in a trauma culture, it also indicates a resilient culture, albeit one dependent on a tightly knit socio-technical infrastructure.

Another recommended best practice as part of future forecasting is evaluating the digital artifacts and preparing for either de-accessioning or migrating selected items to newer technologies. Archive-it.org provides a web archiving service for several disaster archives including *Our Marathon*, Virginia Tech’s April 16th Archives, the JDA, and #blacklivesmatter Web archive. This service helps preserve the collections and to a certain extent, the functionality of the site. Hence, some items and applications are retrievable and interactive on Archive-it.org, whereas others are not included due to the scope and size of the allotted bit budget. The minimal, yet uniform metadata and curation given to these collections are policies that reflect a mission of preservation, and which grants relative autonomy to the participating contributors or “partners.”
It is a mission that is based on the idea that digital information is valuable. Its fragility and representation of the fleeting and the ephemeral contribute to its value. For disaster archives, however, preservation by a third party may enable them to create new uses for their collections, freeing them to continue developing innovative tools or improve their underlying social networks.
These last three stanzas of Paul Celan’s poem, “Ashglory,” are provocative on many levels. They are particularly haunting for the images of the Holocaust they conjure and the reminders of the terrible isolation and absence of a community of mourners that silenced the camp survivors. Not to diminish and over-simplify this beautiful and complex poem, I was particularly struck by the ambiguity of the last lines, “No one bears witness for the witness.” On the one hand, I felt overwhelmed by sadness that I, like the world outside the Nazi concentration camps, could never fully comprehend what the Holocaust survivor/witnesses experienced and that I could never adequately describe, let alone interpret, through factual testimony, the trauma of the Holocaust. Notwithstanding the proximity and intimacy that the National Holocaust Museum provides its visitors, there remain gulfs of linguistic and cultural differences.
On the other hand, I was hopeful, believing that while no “one” bears witness for the witness, there are “many” that can and do. In an era that promotes the aggregation and distribution of oral histories and witness accounts, we have an abundance of witnesses who bear witness for the witness. That is, digital disaster archives have the social and technical infrastructure and resources that provide safe havens and therapeutic rewards for witnesses and survivors who elect to share their traumatic memories. The digital disaster archives could do more, however, to teach site visitors the ethical dimensions of witnessing and disseminating images of traumatic events through online networks. As consumers of media, we are all witnesses to disasters, and as prosumers of digital media, we are co-authors of the collections of memories, captured through online networks and disaster archives. If we practice citizen journalism and contribute content to a disaster archive/memorial I believe we have a moral, if not ethical obligation, to consider the implications of what we create.

A journalist’s photograph of an injured stewardess at the Brussels Airport bombings who was evidently in shock, circulated on the Internet shortly after the picture was taken. When she was questioned why she took photographs instead of assisting the victims, journalist Ketevan Karvana replied, “I am not a doctor. I was only with my MacBook. I took the photos because I realised (sic) I was the only person there” (Maum and Drury “Journalist caught up in the Brussels Airport Blast”). Karvana was compelled to document her witnessing and to verify the terrible reality before her. It was not surprising, given her “journalistic instinct,” but it is also evident that much of the public responds similarly to crises, regardless of professional ethics. Karvana could rationalize her photography, but how is the general public rationalizing this form of witnessing?
The disaster archive/memorial collections provide, in a sense, a means for the public to “witness the witness.” I was particularly intrigued by the references made to ethics and morals as either rationales for making curatorial decisions, or as reasons for sharing memories and artifacts (as recorded in my interviews and revealed in many of the archive’s items).

“I really tried to adhere to the practice of capturing the entire record and not just the ‘nice’ parts or the parts that I find personally interesting. That was more of a concern here, because I was directly involved in the events, rather than being separated by space and time” (Crilly “Re: Follow-up Interview”).

Emotional utterances often accompanied statements of ethical and moral responsibility as in the example below.

“All few hours of my eyes being glued to the TV, and seeing Jeff Bauman’s legs blown off a million of times, I decided I couldn’t watch it anymore. I went on facebook and I saw two things for the rest of the week; people being reflective and apologetic about the bombings, or people complaining about those being reflective and apologetic about the bombings. It made me really irritated to see so many people being so cold-hearted after our home had been attacked” (Anonymous, “I had just returned from France…” Our Marathon).

Both statements struck me as slightly ironic, knowing that Crilly’s collapse of space and time was handled quite differently from Tisdale’s (heightened emotion was a critical part of her methodology) and that the narrator in the preceding statement was driven away from TV footage.
(compassion fatigue, perhaps), only to find similar fatigue irritating. It was interesting to reflect on the roles played by professional ethics (or morality), and subject identity (archivist, curator, or Bostonian as the narrator referred to herself).

Figure 32: Screenshot of my Omeka prototype featuring the photograph of a Boston Marathon Memorial at Copley Square by Ellen Meyers and overlaid on the textured ground of the Pentagon’s memorial. “iPEACE” is an acronym of the dimensions represented in the items and exhibits.

From my close readings of the mission statements and selected contents from the archive/memorials, I developed dimensions, including ethical responsibility and subject identity. I selected these dimensions and others\(^70\) to function as “tags” in my Omeka prototype. They provided me a heuristic for comparing different communities in crisis and identifying social,

\(^70\) I provide my matrix of dimensions in the appendices and also in my Omeka prototype. The dimensions include: ethical responsibility, subject identity, evidence of trauma and recovery, historical consciousness, and participatory archiving.
cultural, and political expressions. Why not also use these dimensions to create an exhibit of artifacts and impressions from my research travels?

In keeping with my purpose to illustrate the ways various items could represent one or several different dimensions, I initially considered naming my collections by the dimensions of my disaster archive matrix. In a standard Omeka platform, however, unique items cannot “exist” in multiple collections. Because most of my artifacts revealed multiple dimensions, I wanted to reflect these multiple “meanings” in the metadata, and also illustrate this in the website. Tags, also commonly known as keywords and associated with vernacular and quixotic expressions, function like categories in my Omeka prototype. Thus, I arranged my items by a set of tags that correspond to dimensions of disaster archive/memorials.

There is also a pedagogical purpose in presenting dimensions through tags. In this prototype, the tags function like a controlled vocabulary, restricted from the public’s participation. My prototype exhibits relationships between contents and imagines themes or narratives by alternating different search strategies. For example, I uploaded a set of photographs illustrating the makeshift memorials mourning the 9/11 attacks and Boston Marathon bombing, respectively. One photograph pricked my interest for its contrasts in color and perspective, and by its metonymic quality. I inserted this photograph in Chapter 7 because it represented people visiting and attending to one of many Boston Marathon makeshift memorials. The photograph struck me as metonymic and not merely as evidence. The memorial’s colorful flowers and posters, array of posters, teddy bears, and Marathon memorabilia attracted a crowd of visitors and attendants, some of whom were also colorfully dressed. This brightly lit memorial was starkly foregrounded before a deserted city street, flanked by drab colored buildings that
diminished in two point perspective to a vanishing point of grayness. This street memorial enabled the grieving public to act, to commune with others, and to occupy a space in between the “before” and “after” of a trauma. The photograph is silent, but conveys the dimensions of mourning, and the importance of witnessing the mourners. Is that not what the disaster archive/memorial also conveys?

I included excerpts from my interviews and photographs of the sites and memorials I visited, tagging these items as I did selected items from the archive/memorials I reviewed. As with all items, I added descriptions, dates, and locations. From my field research, I gained appreciation for using place memories to reconnect traumatized citizens, or conversely, to raise awareness of past injustices. Planned exhibits for this prototype include a travel narrative, using the Neatline annotation tool and timeline for integrating artifacts and interviews from my site visits with my research questions. While this prototype represents neither a conventional approach to building a collection, nor a poetic interpretation of the contents, the Omeka platform and digital tools afforded me an opportunity to reflect on the aesthetics of working with digital archives.

Sharon Daniel avers that “subjects” have replaced “authors” as producers of meaning, and those subjects are not fixed, but variable entities. This database logic was evident in the disaster archives reviewed in the previous chapters; they did not yield narratives with “authorial consistency,” but rather presented multiple narratives and subject identities that coalesced around the traumatic event. These multi-dimensional “selves” characteristically functioned according to certain attitudes and behaviors, which I identified as dimensions, including ethical responsibility, formation of subject identity, mourning, and healing and recovery from a traumatic experience.
All components are potentially equal forces for generating meaningful operations within the archive-as-database.

The items selected for this archive come “alive” or assume meaning when they become searchable. By endowing the items with one or more dimensions, in addition to standard Dublin Core metadata, (location, date, creator, etc.) they do not merely document evidence of a disaster, but they reflect and model critical engagement with the items. In an animistic sense, the digital objects are retrievable and meaningful when conjured from the search engine, functioning somewhat like the Yoruba’s life force, ashé.

According to Robert Farris Thompson, ashé is the Yoruba term for spirit, divine power, or the power-to-make-things-happen. Similar to the Chinese “chi,” this spirited force is manifested in various earthly forms. Although both ashé and chi comprise a universal form of energy, ashé appears to possess its form. The many possible manifestations of Ashé, such as the snake or the lightning bolt, no doubt require interpreters to distinguish between who is possessed or not. Like the effects of different forms of digital media and their corresponding human networks, an interpreter (archivist/curator) may illuminate the many dimensions through thoughtful classification, arrangement, and descriptors. The digital disaster archive optimally makes available powerful items and collections from which a society can construct meaning from tragedy.

Ashé is also used as a chant of unison, similar to “Amen” or “so be it.” The title, “From Ashes to Ashé,” suggests the digital disaster archives may serve as ethical models of witnessing, or they may contain and represent mourning as evidence of the resilient people we are.
Optimistically, disaster archive/memorials may “make things happen” if people can “work with the content.” More importantly, creating exhibits or products from disaster archives fosters constructivist learning and perhaps, awakens our ethical and moral responsibilities to be witnesses for the witness.

In sum, the disaster archive/memorial is imbued with historical and cultural precedents for balancing the chaotic present with the measured distances and perspectives of time and analysis. By concentrating on healing wounds of the disaster, it is possible to become mired in victimhood and myths of innocence. As Patrick L. Smith points out in his critique of the National September 11 Memorial/Museum, the Memorial serves to ensure visitors will continue to remember the horror, the sacrificed innocents, and to never forget the heroes (“American Exceptionalism and American Innocence”). He reminds us that the notion of innocence is misleading and undermines the Museum’s mission to provide the historical context of 9/11.

As I conclude this dissertation, two weeks have elapsed since the gunman, Omar Mateen, murdered 49 people and wounded nearly 53 at Orlando, Florida’s Pulse Nightclub. The processes of tending to the wounded, investigating the crime, and working through grief and mourning are ongoing, and it is too soon to know how this tragedy will be archived and memorialized. Several vigils and makeshift memorials have emerged since the attacks, unifying the local residents and sympathetic others through such symbolic gestures as “Orlando Strong,” “One Pulse,” and “#OrlandoUnited.”

At the same time, the Orlando tragedy, referred to as the “deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, exposes deep fissures in society. Exacerbated by a contentious presidential election,
political factions representing the civil rights of homosexuals, immigration, gun-law restrictions, and varying policies for responding to Islamic terrorists, the eventual memorialization of the massacre will be tinged with competing interpretations of justice for the victims. The challenge for archivists and curators of disaster archive/memorials is to not only respond to the emotional needs of community, but to adhere to the long established ethics for examining and interpreting the spectrum of opinion and documentation.
APPENDIX A: EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH
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EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: From Ashes to Ashes: Memorializing Traumatic Events through Participatory Digital Archives

Principal Investigator: Patricia L. Carlton
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mark Kannath

You are being asked to take part in a research project conducted by Principal Investigator (PI), Patricia Carlton, a PhD candidate in Texts and Technology at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. Whether you take part is up to you. Patricia Carlton may be reached by cell phone at (323) 488-3261 or by email at carltonpatricia@central.ufl.edu

You are being invited to take part in a research study, which will include about 50 people including professionals in the teaching and construction of digital memorials, and local residents of the greater Boston area. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a resident of Boston who has either contributed content to Our Marathon: The Boston Marathon Survivors Archive & WRUR Oral History Project, or would be willing to review the archive’s collections. This phase of the study will begin in June 2014 and extend through January 2015 and will include either face-to-face interviews or internet survey, depending on your preference. The purpose of these interviews and surveys is to study public perception of and participation in Our Marathon, and to compare the digital memorial to other public acts of mourning, including physical memorials, local exhibits, music events, vigils, peace walks, and other events. Participants will be invited to complete an online survey and/or be interviewed at one of Boston’s centrally located public libraries. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The procedures and questionnaires vary according to whether or not you have contributed content to Our Marathon. If you agree to take part in the study and contribute any type of content to Our Marathon, you will be asked to reflect on your experience of sharing and describe any other community memorials you may have participated in regarding the Boston Marathon bombing. If you have not contributed content to Our Marathon, you will be invited to be an “observers” participant.” Following a few questions regarding your location and initial response to the Boston Marathon bombing, you will be asked to review your choice of items and collections in Our Marathon, and comment on your selection. Your comments will be archived as part of my dissertation and your names withheld to protect your privacy. This “archive of an archive” serves to document perceptions of Our Marathon for my dissertation and perhaps promote your continued participation, either in Our Marathon directly or in other historical or community archives.

Interviews shall not extend past one hour and completion of the survey should take less than one hour.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints contact Patricia Carlton, Graduate Student, Texts and Technology, College of Arts and Humanities, 322-400-5201, carltonpatricia@central.ufl.edu, or Dr. Mark Kannath, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Texts and Technology at (407).

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12291 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-8240 or by telephone at (407) 823-3601.
APPENDIX B: APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH
APPENDIX B: APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA0000831, IRB0001158

To: Patricia L. Carlson

Date: October 08, 2014

Dear Researcher:

On 10/08/2014, the IRB approved the following activity in human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

- **Type of Review:** Exempt Determination
- **Title:** From Ashes to Ashes: Memorializing Traumatic Events through Participatory Archives
- **Investigator:** Patricia L. Carlson
- **IRB Number:** IRB-14-10495
- **Grant:** University of Central Florida (UCF)
- **Grant Title:** OTT (Texts and Technology) dissertation award, 2014
- **Research ID:** JVA

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a final Closure report in IRB so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the *Institutional Manual*.

On behalf of Sophia Drapiewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

[Signature]

Signature applied by Joanna Mauranti on 10/08/2014 12:41:59 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator
APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF SITE VISITORS TO OUR MARATHON
APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF SITE VISITORS TO OUR MARATHON

This survey is part of my doctoral research examining the ways in which social media and online memorials contribute to the collective memory and mourning of a community who suffered a catastrophic event. There are two parts to the survey in which you are invited to respond to some or all of the questions. The first part begins with your initial response to the Boston Marathon Bombing and the technologies you used to get information. The second part introduces the website, Our Marathon: the Boston Marathon Bombing Archive & WBUR Oral History Project. You are asked to review and comment on one or more item and collection, reflecting on how well the archive contributes to the city’s healing. The responses boxes expand according to your text.

Part I - Initial Responses to the Boston Marathon Bombing, April 15, 2013

Are you at least 18 years old?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Do you now, or have you recently (in the last five years) lived in the greater Boston area (including all suburbs of Boston, and outlying neighborhoods in northern Massachusetts and lower New Hampshire).

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Where were you when you found out about the Boston Marathon bombing?


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How did you find out?

What were your immediate impressions?

Where were you when you found out about the Lockdown?

How did you find out?

What were your immediate impressions?

How often did you use broadcast news either on TV or the Internet to keep up with information regarding the bombing?

☐ Several times a day ☐ About once a day ☐ A few days a week ☐ Less often

How often did you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to keep up with information regarding the lockdown?

☐ Several times a day ☐ About once a day ☐ A few days a week ☐ Less often

How often did you use broadcast news either on TV or the Internet to keep up with information regarding the lockdown?

☐ Several times a day ☐ About once a day ☐ A few days a week ☐ Less often
Have you participated in any type of public memorial for the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you participated in any type of religious ceremony for the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you participated in any type of sports ceremony in memory of the Boston Marathon bombing (including the 2014 Boston Marathon)
☐ Yes ☐ No

How has the Boston Marathon bombing changed your life?

Would you or your friends consider sharing your stories online?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Part 2 - Reviewing *Our Marathon: the Boston Marathon Bombing Archive & WBUR Oral Histories* functions

☐ Explored the featured collections

☐ Searched for items using the suggested tags

☐ Browsed the City of Boston Archives collection

☐ Read the archive blog, news, or event updates
☐ Added your own content

☐ Downloaded items from any of the collections

☐ Other (Please describe)

Please select the item types you reviewed in *Our Marathon*.

Oral histories ☐

Videos ☐

Social Media ☐

Images ☐

Letters ☐

Posters ☐

Memes ☐

Other (Please describe)
In the following set of questions, you are presented with a statement. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by indicating whether you: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) or Strongly Disagree (SD)

One or more items I selected to review evoked painful memories
SA □ A □ U □ D □ SD □

One or more items I selected to review evoked pleasant memories
SA □ A □ U □ D □ SD □

The collections and their items are appropriate (tasteful and meaningful)
SA □ A □ U □ D □ SD □

If you disagree, please describe what was inappropriate

The items I reviewed fairly represent the diversity of Boston
SA □ A □ U □ D □ SD □

If you do not agree, please describe who was not, but should have been represented in Our Marathon

Our Marathon, overall, commemorates the victims in a positive way
SA □ A □ U □ D □ SD □
Our Marathon, overall, commemorates the survivors in a positive way

SA □  A □  U □  D □  SD □

Our Marathon, overall, commemorates first responders in a positive way

SA □  A □  U □  D □  SD □

Our Marathon, overall, achieves its mission to contribute to the city’s healing process

SA □  A □  U □  D □  SD □

I would like to contribute content to Our Marathon

SA □  A □  U □  D □  SD □

Thank you for your time and effort spent participating in this survey. For questions or concerns, please contact Patricia Carlton, carltonpatricia@knights.ucf.edu or at 352-408-5261.

Survey Monkey

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3CB7YQ9
APPENDIX D: COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
APPENDIX D: COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

From: phillips christian info@c-p-photo.com
Subject: Re: Permission to use your photograph in my dissertation
Date: November 30, 2015 at 1:27 PM
To: cantonpatricia@knights.ucf.edu

Sure, Patricia. You may use the image. Please make sure you credit me accordingly. This is for your use only, though.

good luck, -

----- christian.

christian phillips photography
info@c-p-photo.com
617.990.4587
APPENDIX E: MATRIX OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DIMENSIONS
## APPENDIX E: MATRIX OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DIMENSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Evidence of trauma and recovery</th>
<th>Rituals of Mourning</th>
<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Aesthetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are we living in a trauma culture?</td>
<td>Survivors</td>
<td>Evidence of PTC, links to resources</td>
<td>Memorials and symbols of mourning</td>
<td>Evidence of collaboration in policies and metadata, preservation, open-source</td>
<td>Item types (stories, artwork, photos, etc.), Titles and descriptions, homologous with mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the digitization and archiving of media and communications influencing the collective memories and ritual acts of mourning?</td>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>Arrangement, trajectory of items, narrative</td>
<td>Trajectory or path through items (work of mourning)</td>
<td>Presence or absence of curation, policies</td>
<td>Titles, display layout, curatorial work embedded in or outside of item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does user-participation contribute both an aesthetic and ethic for disaster archiving?</td>
<td>Privacy and ownership of content: Social media and SNS artifacts</td>
<td>Mental health, disaster planning organizations and individuals that contribute content and policy</td>
<td>Shared content and responses</td>
<td>Documentation from official and public sources, variety of media, interrelated and accessible, open source and transparency of methods</td>
<td>Templates for contribution, social media links, affects of crowd and accessibility Multiple links to multiple resources, effortless navigation or disturbing effects from technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for future research</td>
<td>Digital history or Memorial, Institutional or private</td>
<td>Narrative analysis Psychological assessments and surveys of contributors</td>
<td>Hybrid memorials (virtual and physical components), international collaboration on archive/memorials</td>
<td>Investigation of policy change and collaboration between private/public sponsors Case studies of community archives and restorative justice</td>
<td>Database logic, Archival database or Museum exhibit, digital storytelling, montage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F: CHART OF MISSION STATEMENTS AND DIMENSIONS
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission Statements and Dimensions Frequency Chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Marathon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mourning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G: CHART OF INTERVIEWS AND THEMES
### APPENDIX G: CHART OF INTERVIEWS AND THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Aesthetics</th>
<th>Consciousness</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archives and curators re-establish a community’s collective identity.</td>
<td>Social media exchanges are a form of witnessing during a crisis.</td>
<td>Balancing the perspective between documenting history (focused on establishing greater truth through objectivity) and providing space for grieving and mourning (focused on emotions and social solidarity) is very challenging to archivists. There are no professional guidelines or standards to follow.</td>
<td>intimacy with the objects and/or event arouses emotions and may interfere with maintaining an objective perspective.</td>
<td>Many archives keep collections open-ended and have almost impossible goals, including the goal to gather, store, and publish every story about an event (NS11MM). Digitization makes this goal seem feasible. Databases are open-ended, not fixed or closed.</td>
<td>Archives and curators of disaster archives/memorials are vulnerable to some level of posttraumatic stress or depression. Marta “adjusts” her feelings to create the archive. Rainey gets therapy. Ann does not share her stories with friends, and Alicia and Jim report feeling drained at the end of their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archives that focus on the stories of survivors and first responders leave out the community of everyday people who are also in need of comfort and the space for expressing emotions. Making sense of a tragedy</td>
<td>To prepare for a modern disaster, the civic infrastructure needs to be in place: people must value contemporary, urban, local history so that organizations are ready to work together for the healing of the community.</td>
<td>The ethics of an archivist is to recognize your emotions and lack of objectivity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Making sense of a tragedy requires the formation of narratives, yet digital archives (databases) present multiple, disjointed elements that do not always cohere in a meaningful way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Most of the archives with whom I spoke knew only a few cases of how the content of their archive is being used. There is, of course, storic optimism regarding the application of digital tools, particularly maps and timelines.  
- Managing data in an ethical issue, as well as a methodological decision. All use open-source platforms.  
- Storytelling is therapeutic for all parties (narrator, listener, reader). Hoag noted that audio interviews depicted the archivist/curator of being interviewed face-to-face and on video. The audio elicits more emotion than video. (For whom? Those who listen? Or, for those who create the audio?)  
- Internal memories (as remembered and told to family and friends) become formalized when shared with historians and interviewers. The colloquial and embodied memory is transformed into a representation of the remembered event and becomes part of the historical record. Yet, informal memories are also subject to change, not only from social interactions but also from exposure to the symbolism and representation of the remembered event in mass media and digital technologies.  
- Emotions challenge the task of creating collections. Yet, emotions also elevate the importance of the task and help archivists, curators remain focused and committed to the archive (“Rose to the occasion,” Crilly).  
- Archivists, folklorists, curators Hoag, Crilly, Peaker, McGrath, and Tisdale were emotionally present to and deeply affected by their respective work with disaster archives. • Rainey also believes storytelling is essential for constructing meaning. (See psychological theories on storytelling including the work of Bromer, Lushul, and Neimeyer) Stories sequence events and yield Archivists/curators sacra/mental health due to taking on the emotions of others.  

Motivation for creating an archive comes from professional training and/or precedents: -- Hoag and the AFC-Lomax tradition  
Crowdsourcing is limited to uploading and describing (providing metadata as prescribed by archive/museum’s templates) and does not include collaborative development of policies, long-term preservation, etc. (Hoag, Peaker/McGrath, Sylvie/Lori, Theimer)  
- Collective memories in archive/memorials are not pure memories, unmediated by power or edition. Skills required to create, upload, preserve, and disseminate digital content are unequally distributed between public and archivist/curator. Archivists/curators and technicians exercise control over these memories.  
- "No hand holding" regarding outreach. Word of mouth crowdsourcing (Deeb NS11MM).  
- Archivists/curators develop and innovate new practices, methods  
- Archivists/curators sacrifice mental health due to taking on the emotions of others.
LIST OF REFERENCES


———. “Personal Interview.” 26 June 2014.


