



Selected Papers of #AoIR2023:
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DIGITAL MEMORY, PANDEMIC TEMPORALITIES: REFLECTIONS ON STUDYING AND STORING CRISIS MEDIA

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A strength of the wide-ranging field of digital memory studies is its ability to interpret how digital media use shapes the experience and interpretation of crises. Whether examining how groups use social media platforms to create community memory around incidents of racial injustice (Smit, Heinrich, & Broersma, 2017) or how individuals use the internet to document the aftermath and unfolding of environmental disasters (Tandoc & Takahashi, 2017), studies at this intersection probe how crisis events are processed, historicized and reinterpreted through digital media. At the same time, studies of digital memory have long been concerned with how digital media use interfaces with temporality, and the ways in which networked digital devices—from websites (Gitelman, 2006) to platform algorithms (Jacobsen & Beer, 2021) to AI applications (Kidd & McAvoy, 2023)—shape collective relations to time and to the past.

While temporality and crisis are both fundamental threads within digital memory studies, it is rare that they have been in concerted discussion. This panel argues that this is a missed opportunity, especially because a recent and ongoing crisis—the COVID-19 pandemic—has revealed how deeply intertwined digital media use, temporality, and crisis are. Using COVID-19 as a case, this panel examines how networked digital media interface with experiences of temporality, playing a fundamental role in shaping how the COVID-19 crisis is related to and remembered over time.

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More than a juncture through which to explore how fundamental themes in digital memory studies interact, COVID-19 has also revealed an opportunity to reflect on approaches to studying digital memory in general. Unlike other crisis events that a researcher might interpret from an outside perspective—whether by virtue of temporal distance (e.g. the event occurred long ago) or social distance (e.g. not being directly affected by the event in question)—no one was a complete “outsider” to the effects of the pandemic. In response, this panel also explores how digital memory research was altered by the conditions of the pandemic, whether grappling with how the strange experience of pandemic time shaped participants' ability to reflect on their experience, or how digital platforms and infrastructures emerged, changed, or obstructed practices of memory work and archiving.

Crisis events like the COVID-19 pandemic are often invoked as revolutionary, whether these revolutions refer to sweeping societal changes or activism and social justice. Indeed, pandemic safety restrictions precipitated social and technological change while also intensifying existing inequalities. Pandemic safety restrictions also required researchers to adjust their methodologies and project designs, adopting new fluidities and practices while sacrificing others. Amid ongoing conversations about social and epistemological revolution found in crisis, this panel also interrogates how considering temporal frameworks can shape what it means to “revolutionize” social and institutional memory practices as well as academic research approaches.

This panel incorporates four projects that examine the relationship between crisis and digital memory across complementary temporal and structural considerations. In conversation, these projects present reflections spanning personal and institutional pandemic memories; crisis time scales; and visual, sonic, and infrastructural media. The panel begins with a project theorizing the interlapping time scales of pandemic and crisis time, internet time, and research time that shape the study of crisis events in digital contexts. Then, the second project reflects on the process of scrolling back through research participants' pandemic era social media profiles—evaluating the profile as a space for memory storage and connective memory work. From there, the third project examines *Corona Diaries*, a digital audio archive populated with user-generated submissions from around the globe, through communal listening and talking back to archive entries. The final project investigates how professional archivists and librarians have managed rapid response collecting initiatives during the pandemic and made sense of its ambiguous end point—when to stop collecting.

Ultimately, this panel underscores the interconnectedness of crisis and temporality in digital memory studies, inviting conversation on mediated memories of disruptive events constructed by institutions, individuals, and researchers themselves. Over three years after the start of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this panel will meditate on the early memories of an unbounded pandemic history. Together, we seek to spark further inquiry on the ways that crisis shapes digital memory as well as the ways that experiencing crisis informs and, in some cases, transforms the research process.

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FROM PANDEMIC TIME TO RESEARCH TIME: EXAMINING SHIFTING TIMESCALES OF CRISIS AND DIGITAL RESEARCH

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Introduction

When the COVID-19 virus rapidly spread across the globe in early 2020 it upended daily life and changed the course of history. While there have been numerous scholarly explorations of the pandemic through the lens of public health and political crisis relatively little attention has been paid to the ways that COVID-19 was and is fundamentally also what Baraitser and Salisbury (2020) refer to as a crisis of time.

Common rhetoric has referred to the pandemic as a paradigmatic temporal shift, ushering a new post pandemic era or epoch that is markedly different than the “before times” that came prior (Velasco et al., 2022). Terms such as ‘unprecedented’, ‘uncertain’ and ‘unparalleled’ have been endlessly parroted by governments, corporations and institutions to mark the way that this crisis has drastically rearranged temporalities of and temporal relationships to technology, work and social life (Chan, 2020).

This paper takes this call to examine the times and temporalities of the pandemic seriously. Drawing from a broader two-year digital ethnographic project examining the use of social media to build community and provide support during the pandemic in Toronto, Canada, this paper takes a step back to engage in a rigorous reflection of the temporalities of digital life during the pandemic. Ultimately, this paper argues that three distinct yet interlapping temporal scales - which I term pandemic time, research time and internet time - must be concurrently considered and accounted for when studying digital pandemic data. This framework also has implications for how we come to study crisis events more widely.

Pandemic Time and Crisis Time

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The COVID-19 pandemic, akin to other crises, was characterized by simultaneous and parallel temporal processes of rupture and stasis. Firstly, at certain periods of the pandemic especially during the beginning, changes and shifts happened very rapidly. Within the span of a few weeks schools and businesses shut down, flights became grounded, borders closed, and governments across the globe imposed lockdowns and quarantine orders. Many have described (Velasco et al., 2022) a sense of the pandemic marking a distinct before and an after, a temporal rift that separated the time of the pandemic from the time that preceded it. Although it is tempting to say that there is a split in our timeline, critical scholars especially feminist and Black scholars remind us of the dangers of such out of time rhetoric and remind us that this moment is not outside of or a shift in the progression of time but rather a product of it (Bhatia, 2021; Chan, 2020). Our experience of the pandemic is irrevocably intertwined with the social that came context; it is a natural outgrowth of imperialist and capitalist processes history and the result of decades if not centuries of crises-racial, environmental and social - preceding it (Neely & Lopez, 2022).

Yet, just as periods of the pandemic were characterized by this sense of temporal rupture and rift for many much of the pandemic is reflective of a deep sense of temporal suspension and stasis – a feeling of time slowing down, if not grinding to a complete halt. Whether it was due to quarantine or simply due to the disruption of one's normal routine many found themselves suddenly out of step from the breakneck pace of modern capitalism forced to slow down.

Internet Time

Even as every aspect of non-digital life had come to a standstill amid nationwide lockdowns, digital life began to grow rapidly and exponentially. From a shift towards remote education to the increase in online streaming and retail, the proliferation of the digital led to an acceleration in the development of virtual spaces that can operate both synchronously and asynchronously (Chan, 2020).

Prior work has examined both how online experiences are fundamentally shaped by time (Keightley, 2012) and also how the proliferation of the internet has led to a fundamental restructuring of our conceptions and experience of time (Lohmeier et al., 2020). Yet what I term as Internet time in this paper refers not just to the structuring of time on and through the internet but rather to the vital temporal qualities of Internet data.

All social data, both online and offline, is embedded within the flow of time. It is created within a specific temporal context and under a specific set of temporal constraints and conditions. Yet Internet data is often methodologically treated as though it is *timeless*. Through technologies such as web-scrapers, digital APIs and the Way back machine we are able to relatively easily access data from the past and bring it into our present, removed from the moments of time within which they were produced. In order to holistically understand the online data that we work with, researchers must begin to meaningfully grapple with how the data are placed in time.

Research Time and Studying the Recent Past online

Finally, the last timescale that must be considered is that of the academy itself. The modern neo-liberal university is increasingly governed by linear, future oriented timescales which is at odds with the with the non-linear, often slow moving and emergent temporal realities of the lived experience of doing research (Ylijoki, 2014).

The university also attempts to remove itself from the “indebtedness of the past” (Facer & Smith, 2021) and often becomes doggedly focused on the production of present and future. Thus, researchers within the academy become plagued by a need to produce research that is “timely”, current or cutting edge. Yet almost all research endeavours concerned with examination of events and crises, even those which are not traditionally conceived of as historical or archival, are at their core projects in reconstructing the past, even if it is the recent past. This is by virtue of the fact that social phenomena must be studied after the fact. Therefore, in paying attention to these disjoints between research time as constructed by the institution and in the lived temporalities of the research of doing we come to more clearly understand how all of us even when we do not study time are always fundamentally working with and in time.

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“GOD, IT JUST KEEPS GOING . . .”: STORING PERSONAL MEMORIES OF COLLECTIVE CRISIS ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE

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In times of national and global crisis, people turn to personal media production to collectively witness, document, and cope with mass disruption as it reconfigures their lives (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2008). This practice encompasses pre-digital media modalities such as paper diaries and scrapbooks (Good, 2013), but social media platforms also extend its reach and reshape its manifestations (Humphreys, 2018). Foundationally, social media platforms provide digital spaces for the *storage* and *display* of personal media content for future reengagement, which has led some scholars to liken them to exhibitions or archives (Hogan, 2010; Zhao et al., 2013). This ability to “freeze, replay, and store” (Zelizer, 2002, p. 698) personal experiences through media is a key building block of connective memory work, which involves reconstructing the past in the present using digital, networked technologies (Smit, 2020). In other words, social media platforms play an important role in preserving personal accounts of pivotal events to forge collective narratives and spur recovery in the face of crisis (Zelizer, 2002).

Although boyd (2014) labels the persistence of digital content as one of the key technological affordances of social media, this persistence has become increasingly subject to platform specificities, governance, and user practices (Abidin, 2021). These changes have spurred theoretical and methodological questions surrounding the preservation and obfuscation of social media traces within digital memory studies and platform studies (e.g., Cardell et al., 2017). How do social media platforms configure users’ access to their own memories via their social media posts? What role do platform interfaces and cultures play in dictating what is most readily remembered and forgotten? I examine these questions through the lens of one of the chief storytelling sites within most social media platforms: the social media profile. Although social media profiles reflect only a fraction of the digital traces that users produce, they display a curated version of that users’ selfhood and posts for networked audiences (Hogan, 2010).

This project extends research on the mnemonic capabilities of social media platforms to trace how profiles shape personal remembrancing during a largescale, collective crisis. I

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focus specifically on the COVID-19 pandemic as a far-reaching global crisis that showcases collective experiences of disruption as well as heightened social inequalities. Using self-confrontational methodologies, the purpose of this research is to deconstruct how social media profiles enable and constrain personal projects of connective memory work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Design

This project draws from 48 social media scroll back interviews with adult social media users from the United States conducted between July and December 2021. The scroll back method combines in-depth interviewing with observational research by inviting participants to scroll back through their own social media profiles alongside the researcher (Robards & Lincoln, 2019). The profile serves as a “memory object,” and the interview reflects on machine- and user-created traces through participants’ personal memories of them (Møller & Robards, 2019, p. 105). In providing a “tour” of their profile history, the participant serves as a co-analyst of their own digital self-making while the researcher asks sensitizing questions (Lincoln & Robards, 2017).

In these 40–70-minute-long virtual interviews, I asked participants to scroll back through their profiles to capture the duration of the pandemic in the U.S., starting in March 2020. Participants selected the social media platforms that we discussed, which came to include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, and TikTok. The data from this project, though largely focused on recalling pandemic memories, is inevitably situated within its own contemporary pandemic present in late 2021. In this study, I examine how participants reinterpret the pandemic past within the interview present to reflect on the ways that different social media profiles and platforms shape how participants preserve and recall personal memories of the COVID-19 crisis.

Profile Structure and Practice for Memory Work

The scroll back method encourages a purposefully artificial interaction with social media profiles, even if many participants mentioned using the same practice in their everyday lives: the act of manually looking back at one’s own past digital media traces. Conducting these interviews *across* distinct social media platforms underscored the role of platform memory infrastructures in the storage and display of media traces (Corry, 2022). I found that several interlocking aspects of memory infrastructure shaped the accessibility of participants’ past posts for present engagement. These include profile interfaces, platform interference, and user interaction.

Profile Interface

Profile interface played a significant role in facilitating scroll back interviews, with some profiles making past posts a much more central aspect of user experience than others. For example, Instagram’s grid-like profile interface allowed participants to easily scroll back to the early days of the pandemic and to chart the journey of their profiles since (Leaver et al., 2020). It also encouraged extensive editing. Several participants reported reflecting “almost obsessively” on their Instagram profiles while staying at home under pandemic lockdowns, leading them to delete posts that they reinterpreted as unflattering or, in some cases, repurpose their profiles altogether. Alternatively, Facebook profiles presented a cumbersome and difficult interface for scrolling through past posts. At the time of the interviews, Facebook’s profile interface showed only a single post at a time

with no readily available option to move to specific dates or years. One participant, Elena (21), maintained at the beginning of the interview that she had completely stopped using Facebook since the start of the pandemic. However, she later discovered that she had shared and posted frequently in the first six months of lockdowns, a fact that she had forgotten until engaging in the laborious process of scrolling backward. Elena went from saying, “the pandemic started, and I just stopped posting” to “God, it just keeps going.”

Platform Interference

Platforms also interfered in the preservation and display of participants’ social media posts through algorithmic governance and curation. In several instances, participants found that posts they had previously shared on Facebook and Twitter containing COVID-19 information had been flagged and blocked as misinformation, with platforms dictating which aspects of the pandemic participants *should* forget. On the other hand, Facebook also displayed auto-generated “on this day media” posts referencing happier pre-pandemic days or early pandemic memories that were sometimes painful to remember.

User Interaction

Finally, scrolling back required participants to interact with their own rhythms of self-representation through the frequencies with which they posted, shared, and in some cases, were tagged in social media content. One participant, Nora (30), lamented the irregularity of her pandemic posts, saying that she viewed her profile as “a story,” and its account of the pandemic would be full of gaps.

Self-Confrontation and Proximity to Crisis

The backdrop for all of these interviews is, of course, an ongoing pandemic—an event that subsumed myself as a researcher and my research participants. While profiles served as a mnemonic device during the interview process, they were also products of collective traumas and ongoing reinterpretation. The study of social media profiles in crisis is a meditation on the process of remembering an unfolding event as it happens as platform infrastructures reveal and obscure memories in the process.

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DIALOGUES WITH AURAL DIGITAL ARCHIVES IN POST-PANDEMIC TIMES

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Introduction

2020 marked the beginning of a global pandemic that almost immediately forced people around the globe to contend with isolation and an unknown disease at a rate not seen since the Flu pandemic of the early 20th century. Suddenly contact among friends, classmates, colleagues, and families had to be severely limited or stalled. Borders were closed sometimes with only little warning leaving many travelers, international students, and other migrants with very few options. As the world contemplated solitude in pandemic times, outlets like Twitter, Instagram, and Tik Tok often became the social media platforms people used to vent their frustrations with rapidly fluctuating state and local pandemic measures and/or burdened medical infrastructure.

It was also a place to share disapproval with the federal government's inability to limit disinformation about the new virus. Finally, social media outlets also provided space for people to show solidarity with protest movements against racism and police brutality that exploded after the death of George Floyd. Amidst these tumultuous times, many libraries, universities, and publications sought to document peoples' experiences. At the beginning of the pandemic, local, national, and global public and private institutions sought submissions in the form of photos, recordings, stories, and interviews from the public that were related to the pandemic. *Corona Diaries*, an open access platform that allows participants to record an audio diary entry related to the pandemic based on a daily prompt, is just one of many global crowd-sourced efforts to collect pandemic experiences. While initially intended for Creatives, the *Corona Diaries* platform has nevertheless received support, attention, and responses from a diverse range of people of different ages and occupations by providing a platform for spatially dispersed voices to discuss the shared complexities of living within an ongoing crisis.

Method: Community Listening and Asynchronous Pandemic Dialogues

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My paper demonstrates how digital archives can be used creatively to preserve the memory of Covid-19 in post pandemic times. I argue for thinking about crisis moments as temporal openings for researchers to experiment with fresh, collaborative, and creative methods for understanding the individual and collective experiences of a given crisis as it unfolds. My analysis draws on my research with the sonic pandemic archive, *Corona Diaries*, and the focus groups I held with different adult members of Philadelphia communities, in which we listened and discussed a selection of diaries together.

The paper that has emerged from these steps analyzes what it means to enter dialogue with a digital archive and ‘talk back.’ I argue that engaging with, listening, and discussing the pandemic archive as a community creates a sort of three-way asynchronous dialogue between the archive’s participants, the focus groups’ respondents, and me—the researcher. This ‘dialogue’ created space in the analysis for the meaning of these digital diaries to be negotiated with openly and be dealt with frankly from three different standpoints, the archive’s, mine, and the community members. Moreover, I demonstrate how examining the potential impact of *Corona Diaries* on listeners can help approximate the reach of other crowd-sourced, community- based memorialization projects and archives that seek to preserve the toll of the pandemic in public memory.

It should be noted here that because these aural diaries exist as an open platform, one’s sense of ‘community’ is detached from the burdens of being quantified by engagement statistics, comments, and shares and instead rests on the assumption that the participants are in ongoing dialogue with themselves and the listener. This type of ‘open’ dialogue becomes even more pronounced within digital spaces as the immortality of digital content makes dialogue, and thus community, possible for people that are dispersed spatially and temporally (Anderson 1994). In short, one can imagine that because *Corona Diaries* is a digital archive, the ‘addressee’ of a given audio diary will change as different people and generations rediscover the stories over time. Thus, community within the *Corona Diaries* platform is premised on what Lena Buford (2020) calls “anonymous intimacy.” It is this anonymous intimacy, promised by digital technology, that makes an expanding notion of community possible during and after the pandemic.

The Place of Digital Archives in Post-Pandemic Times

Moreover, this paper illustrates how different members of the same community may negotiate between the personal and the collective toll of the pandemic as they listen to the collection of audio diaries and enter dialogue with each other about the archive’s content. Part of the motivation of this paper stems from the insistence that rigorous work on the pandemic and future crises must seek to mediate between the communal and the individual. The macro-level spectacularized shutdowns of schools, neighborhoods, and whole countries were some of the ways the world learned to internalize the pandemic early on. While these measures, and the media’s reporting of these measures were important for galvanizing governments into action (action that included making and distributing masks and PPE gear and developing a vaccine), they sometimes masked the individual stories that made up the crisis. Promoting these personalized stories can contribute to a more holistic understanding and appreciation for the toll of the pandemic.

This paper also demonstrates how Covid-19 archives more generally can be used in classroom settings, libraries, museums, and future public memorials to facilitate ongoing

collective reckonings with the individual lives and experiences lost during the pandemic. Local, national, and global efforts to create a premediated infrastructure for pandemic experiences (see Erll 2007, 2017, 2020), both digital and non-digital, that in essence preserves and facilitates the spread of these experiences are some of the most important collective tools we have. This infrastructure of course, would include the use of archives like *Corona diaries* in public institutions to help us anticipate future disaster. This may in turn help raise support for policies that can help us withstand other disasters of similar or greater proportions.

Emphasizing the policy stakes of this paper is critical as it will give future researchers' a sense of what features of pandemic stories and experiences may resonate with different types of audiences. This can then inform knowledge about how digital technologies can help manage, mediate, and preserve our memories of Covid-19 moving forward.

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WHEN DOES A PANDEMIC END? BOUNDING CRISIS THROUGH DIGITAL RAPID-RESPONSE COLLECTING

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In the early months of COVID-19 lockdowns in the US, press outlets discussed how social media and other digital documentation would provide a robust record of the pandemic. Under headlines like “What Historians Will See When They Look Back on the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020” (Burch, 2020) or “This Year Will End Eventually. Document It While You Can” (Blume, 2020), articles detailed how archival groups were aggregating diverse digital media that could one day provide a historical account of that moment.

These archival practices can be characterized as “rapid-response collecting,” a methodology used by information institutions like libraries and archives to collect “material culture from major events as the phenomenon unfolds or in the immediate aftermath” (Debono, 2021, p. 180). Yet unlike other American crises for which rapid-response collecting had been employed—whether September 11th, 2001, or the Boston Marathon bombings of 2013—COVID-19 lacked easily marked temporal boundaries, its moment extending beyond the first weeks of lockdown once optimistically imagined. Instead of a clean ending to COVID-19, cultural debates emerged around when the pandemic would end, and what it would look like when it did (Kolata, 2020).

Collecting efforts around COVID also differed from previous rapid-response projects as they were focused on aggregating *digital* traces. Because of the prevalence of digital device use and the need to collect materials during social distancing measures, archivists focused on gathering social media, websites, digital diaries, and smartphone photos, often crowdsourced and submitted through institution websites.

Encountering different constraints and possibilities through digital collection, and facing a crisis that exceeded predicted temporal boundaries, professionals had to ask novel questions of their rapid-response collections: when do we stop collecting, and how do we know it’s the right time? In other words, when does a pandemic end? How is this reflected in digital collecting practices?

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In conversation with this panel's focus on the mediated temporalities of COVID-19, and how these temporalities shape the study of crisis, this paper addresses the cultural ambiguity around the pandemic's end in the context of digital rapid-response collecting. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 21 archivists, librarians and other information professionals who engaged in digital collecting around COVID-19, it reviews how they planned, executed, and ended rapid-response collecting around COVID-19; how they grappled with the ambiguous ends of the pandemic through collecting practices; and how these practices will shape how COVID-19 is historicized and remembered into the future.

Shaping Event Meaning through Digital Media Collection

Scholars across media and memory studies have long observed that public crises' legacies are tied to the production, circulation, and preservation of media. Individuals, communities, and institutions use media to process and produce the past, whether "bearing witness" to events, marking them as significant through media production (Zelizer, 2002); using media to solidify narratives about events, with the potential to outlast individual human memory (Hirsch, 2008; Sturken, 1997); or crafting presence and absence in historiographies through the exclusion or inclusion of media in archives (Caswell, 2004; Trouillot, 1995). Media, that is, are crucial in "boundary making" around crisis events; they are used to cohere and categorize a moment, locating it in time and space (Wagner-Pacifci, 2017). These actions influence what an event means, who it pertains to, and what its socio-political impacts are.

Because internet-based digital media have altered the landscape of media production, circulation, and preservation, the experience and legacies of crisis events have likewise changed. For instance, the web's unstable content alters traditional temporal patterns of the documented past (Chun, 2011; Gitelman, 2006), just as social media platforms' algorithmic patterns and ownership structures influence the organization of previously posted media, shaping narratives about the past (Corry, 2023; Jacobsen & Beer, 2021). That is, the conditions of digital media production, circulation, and preservation affect how a crisis event is categorized, located in time and space, and given meaning over time.

By looking at institutions—like libraries and archives, history centers and museums—that actively deal with questions around event boundary-making through the collection of digital media, this paper grapples with the contemporary production of the past through COVID-19.

Methods

I draw on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 21 people from 20 information institutions in the US conducted from October 2022–January 2023 who had engaged in digital collecting around COVID. I assembled participants via press pieces about archiving projects, lists of COVID-19 archiving projects (e.g. "Documenting COVID-19"), and snowball sampling. Participants included staff at federal libraries and archives; university libraries and digital humanities centers; city and state-run libraries and

archives; and local museums/history centers. Interviews lasted an hour and were conducted on Zoom or phone.

Following interviews, a thematic content analysis using an inductive/deductive coding schema was performed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes from related literature in digital media and information studies were brought to these interviews, just as interviews were coded in-vivo, with novel themes arising from the data. The proceeding section provides a brief overview of themes.

An Archive of Lockdown, an Archive of Exhaustion

The collection itself is an event. So when does the event end?

– Lisa, Archivist, Federal library

Archivists, librarians, and historians who engaged in digital rapid-response collecting ultimately grappled with the ambiguous ends of the pandemic in diverse ways. Yet the event's closure was not routinely considered as institutions embarked on these projects. Instead, participants emphasized uncertainty about the pandemic's timeline as they began rapid-response digital collecting, reflecting what Wagner-Pacifici (2021, p.) has characterized as typical of crisis events, entered through a "phase of incomprehension and unknowing" when an event is not yet "named and determined."

Lack of temporal planning was tied to the fact that many institutions were engaging in digital rapid-response collecting for the first time: most participants described their COVID collecting as their first time collecting born-digital materials at all. In this way, COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for institutions to explore collecting media from the present, and how digital traces might have representational power over time.

Participants instead dealt with the temporal scope of the pandemic, and the possibility of its end, on an ad-hoc basis. Many described their collections as having a seeming "natural end," a point at which the public lost interest in documenting and donating digital materials. Archivists noted that this end was grounded in exhaustion: people were tired of processing an ongoing traumatic event through mediation. One historian lamented that his project was an "archive of lockdown," not a collection representing the evolution of COVID-19 over time.

It was an open question for many professionals how these digital traces would be preserved and accessed over time, and what the future use of these collections would be. Some participants, especially at smaller institutions, had to largely give up on actively maintaining these digital collections, particularly when returning to on-site work and the physical demands of existing collections.

Through these practices, COVID-19 becomes bounded. The digital traces collected in rapid-response efforts represent the pandemic as an historical event, but in their absences also reflect people's coping, exhaustion, and desire to move on through *non-documentation*. Thus, what falls outside this temporal scope are experiences where

people continued grappling with the dangers of a pandemic that is never quite out of sight.

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