

PAST PERFECT: PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL MEMORY

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Past Perfect: Prospects for the Future of Digital Memory

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This project explores two digital memory technologies: digital memory banks, particularly the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB), and Documenting the Now (DocNow), a tool that allows archivists and researchers the ability to collect, analyze, and preserve Twitter messages and other web resources. Ultimately, this project works to develop an understanding of how these specific tools approach and “do” memory work. Both tools animate memory work in distinct, and particular ways, thereby demonstrating how memory both produces and enacts relations across time and space. The primary method of this project is the rhetorical analysis of digital memory practices, and the project works to demonstrate how practices of memory have become part and parcel of digital media technologies.

DEDICATION

For Grandmama—

“Anything can happen, child, anything can be...”

For Bec—

It was an honor and a privilege. You owed me about a million more miles.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have always joked that when I finally got around to writing one of these things that the acknowledgements ran the risk of being longer than the project itself, this because I am a somewhat reticent writer, yes, but also because I am fortunate to have a lot of people to thank. The child of a single parent, I was always taught that it: ‘takes a village,’ and if my youth wasn’t proof-positive of the truth of such a claim, the writing of this project and the pursuit of graduate study as a whole certainly has been.

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Dr. Ellen Ledoux did her best to encourage me to become a more lucid writer. I feel as though this project demonstrates that I have probably been unsuccessful in that

endeavor. But I did try. I am grateful to her for her openness and support, as well as our shared appreciation for Mary Berry's outerwear.

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INTRODUCTION

For me, this project begins at a Walgreens on Magazine St. in New Orleans.

In 2015, five of my best friends and I drove (yep, all 28 hours) from Philadelphia to New Orleans so that I could race a half-Ironman. We left on Thursday after class in a rented Chevy Equinox, packed to the brim with snacks from my mom, embarrassingly cased pillows, and triathlon gear. It was a ridiculous proposition, honestly. The goal was to be in New Orleans by Friday night in advance of race check-in on Saturday morning, race on Sunday, leave on Monday morning and be back in Philadelphia by class-time: 9:30 AM on Tuesday. After a disastrous AirBnB conundrum in the Lakeview section of town, we scrambled across the city to find any place that had lodging before settling in at the Hampton Inn New Orleans, adjacent to the convention center.

You're probably wondering how the Walgreens has anything to do with this.

The race was in April. April is still decidedly cold in Philadelphia. New Orleans in April, however, is 77 and sunny with humidity so thick that walking feels like swimming. On a shakeout run before the race I found myself overheating, and I popped into the Walgreens for air conditioning and maybe a Gatorade. On the corner of the building I noticed a thick burgundy line wrapping the building to the end of the block. In big block letters before another thick burgundy line on the other side was her name: KATRINA. Back in the hotel, I would later learn that these water line markers are all over New Orleans. They serve as material testimony to what happened in August of 2005, a perpetual facsimile that corresponds to the way the rivers and lakes rose up to the meet the city and then promptly destroyed it.

You see, the bike course of the race runs along fifty-six miles of Chef Menteur Highway, the first automobile road to ever access the marshy eastern edge of Orleans parish. Hurricane Katrina hit this area particularly hard in 2005, with portions of “Chef,” as the locals call it, remaining closed for over a year. From the Chef you can see...a lot of things. In particular, the parts of New Orleans that still, now over a decade later, bear traces of what happened in August of 2005.

It might seem a bit on the nose to admit it, but I spent a considerable amount of time thinking about Katrina during the race. From the moment I jumped off the pontoon dock in South Shore Marina Harbor and swam against the current of Lake Pontchartrain (they didn't tell us about the alligators until later) to the moment I crossed the finish line off Stars and Stripes Boulevard, to downing a Hurricane in the French Quarter (where my roommate was offered a parking spot for the meager sum of flashing the gentleman who offered it) in effort to mitigate the worst sunburn of my life, there was something about the race venue that, even a full decade after Katrina, felt eerie to me.

Following Katrina, Chris Rose, a journalist for the Times-Picayune, penned a collection of stories that recounts life during the first four months after the hurricane. The book, *I Dead in Attic: After Katrina*, titled after the messages left for search and rescue crews on abandoned homes in New Orleans received much critical acclaim. In an Amazon review of the book, titled, “Again and Again I Read His “Thank You America,” an Amazon customer known only as “NOLA Girl,” writes: “My home had 12 feet of water that marinated for 3 ½ weeks all of our collections of memories and treasures in the regurgitated sewage and gumbo of garage liquids and cleaning fluids, gasoline, oil and whatever solubles [sic] the unleashed Lake Pontchartrain picked up along the way. The

book brought back color to many of my memories that had taken on a kind of grayscale color in repressed memory.” There are about a half-dozen reviews that are neither as sprawling nor eloquent as NOLA Girl’s, but speak to the same themes.

In July of 2009, Kevin Law writes, "I live in New Orleans, and my wife and I lost everything we owned in Hurricane Katrina...it is a measure of how bad things were around here that we lost every single thing we owned...but we feel like we're some of the lucky ones, because so many people had (and still have) it so much worse..." Law's review continues with a reflection upon how his life has changed since the storm, that he copes by reading books about Katrina, and reminisces upon the fact that while Rose wrote for the Times-Picayune for years before the hurricane, his pieces were of no interest to Law, at least not until he read the book. 5 people found this helpful.

In June of 2013, Marion Gagliano writes, "First let me say.... I am from New Orleans...For months; I felt that I had survived the emotional trauma that most residents had suffered. About 3 months after Katrina, I suddenly was hit by a wave of depression. It is hard to see your city devastated and struggling to jump through mounds of red tape involved in rebuilding your life and city..." Gagliano's post is the first one that calls it as it was—traumatic.

And finally, in April of 2017, in a post written by an anonymous Amazon Customer titled, "Chris Rose is an awesome writer." they write, "I am from New Orleans, cried through the entire book, but Chris told the true tale of what we experienced...." The reviewer calls the author, "Chris," as though they're friends, or at the very least good acquaintances.

One must wonder about the motive behind such posts while perusing these reviews. There are few interactive digital spaces less inviting than the reviews section of Amazon—you're asked for an evaluation through the deceptively-difficult-to-adequately-assign star system and then offered a text box through which you can offer a more cogent defense of your starring decision. Since the system is designed to review merchandise, the box includes a few questions, but the one I find interesting in this particular context is, "What did you use this product for?" While I could reasonably surmise that the book was of interest to NOLA Girl for a litany of reasons, most of which pertain to the fact that she was a survivor of Hurricane Katrina and its devastation, her response is striking to me because it both asks and answers a different question: what are you using this *space* for?

In the absence of anything else, these Amazon reviews about this particular book, generated in the early years of remembering Katrina, between 2009 and 2015, seem to perform two tasks in simultaneity. These reviews demonstrate the lack of formalized memorial efforts following Hurricane Katrina while at the same time responding to it. Insofar as survivors of Katrina, and residents of New Orleans found it more useful, or perhaps more meaningful to produce these commemorative narratives through a book review, it is clear that they have been produced in effort to meet some previously unaddressed need. As such, these individuals have worked to create their own sort of memorial community, a space in which they can leave these remarks to which other people can both read and respond to them. This is significant in that experiences of trauma can be both isolating and alienating. As such, communal memorial efforts, the like the ones taken up by NOLA girl, Marion Gagliano, etc., can and often do provide

transformative affective potential through the connections they enable people to make in effort to counter feelings of isolation following a traumatic event.

A November 2007 Ironman press release begins, "In a city that was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina just two years ago, there only appears to be promise in its future. Rebuilding efforts are fully underway and the city welcomes Ironman 70.3 with enthusiasm." Two years later, the inaugural Ironman 70.3 New Orleans took place. The race medal, a coveted token for having completed the distance, featured prominently a replica of the famed New Orleans Crescent City water meter covers. These nine-pound meter covers could at one point be found all over the city and became an emblem of New Orleans culture. Local jewelers made earrings and pendants of the design; gift shops sold them as mouse pads and coasters. Following Katrina, however, many of the historic water meter covers had to be replaced, robbing the city of its iconic relationship with them. Following Katrina, it seemed, the people of New Orleans had to imagine not just new ways of being in their city, but new ways of relating to it as well.

Amid street closures and expensive permits, the race did indeed seem to be a hit with the locals. Despite the decision to move the race out of the French Quarter/the University of New Orleans' campus during the year in which I raced it, the streets were still lined pretty healthily with spectators. Armed with cowbells and vuvuzelas and bottles of water, you almost would not have known that the same place in which thousands of lycra-clad triathletes were plodding through had been almost entirely under water just a decade before, with the prospect of just existing a looming uncertainty. When asked about the decision to launch a race in New Orleans, Ashley Barkley, then race director was quoted as saying, "New Orleanians are more open to that idea. There is a fair

or festival literally every week of the year here. Obviously, we're used to large events...it is part of the culture here."

THE HURRICANE DIGITAL MEMORY BANK (HDMB)

In November of 2005, three months after Hurricane Katrina made landfall, the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB) went live. Using electronic media to, "collect, preserve, and present the stories and digital record of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita," one of the key goals of the HDMB is to capture a variety of responses to the impact of the hurricane and its ensuing traumatic aftermath ("About the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank"). It is the largest free public archive of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with over 25,000 items in the collection, and the contributions came in first as a flood, then as a trickle, and now as a drought. The idea behind the HDMB is that visitors to the site, presumably those who lived through or had some memory of Hurricane Katrina, would contribute first-hand accounts and/or anecdotes, including images, blogs, emails or other born-digital content, to the archive.

At a time in which digital archives, memory banks in particular, were rather popular, the HDMB was often critiqued for lacking a robustness when it came to serving as a sort of touchstone for those who had lived through Katrina and had something to say, or otherwise formally remember, about that experience. In particular, the HDMB is often compared to the September 11th Digital Archive (911digitalarchive.org), against which it is deemed a resounding failure. These archives, while produced by the same foundations (the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media) in response to similar events--regionally-bound, event-based traumas--occupy two distinct moments in digital time which fundamentally alter the way in which they can engage memory work. While

indeed the HDMB lacks certain sophistication in that the digital environment in which it exists is somewhat cumbersome and in desperate need of repair, it is worth noting that especially in comparison to other digital memory banks which seek to serve the same function, the HDMB is at a woeful disadvantage, and always has been.

On December 7th 2001, Sec. 701 of House Resolution 3338 (HR 3338) was passed in order to, "collect and preserve in the National Museum of American History artifacts relating to the September 11th attack of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon," as well as to appropriate five million dollars in order to facilitate such an undertaking. It is perhaps unsurprising that no such measures were taken with regard to preserving the memory of the events and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. However, the survivors of Hurricane Katrina were then forced to reckon with a sort of twinned set of traumas. Indeed there is that of the event itself--Hurricane Katrina, through which thousands experienced not only the devastation of their home and city, but also dislocation, abandonment, violence, intimidation and other forms of systemic infrastructural violence. But then there is also the non-experience of this event receiving any sort of formalized recognition, thus creating a sense of erasure that in many ways was continually reiterated throughout the aftermath of Katrina.

Cultural memory of Katrina persists in New Orleans in a way that it simply does not anywhere else in the country. Logically, this makes sense. Of course it lingers there, that's where it happened. In the aftermath of such destruction and devastation, one could argue, the people of the Gulf Coast, particularly the people of New Orleans, did not need to start devising a system of thinking about how they would remember this event. It was not really a question for them. Or at least, they did not need that as much as they needed

safe shelter, food, potable water, medical attention, or any of the other things that one can reasonably deem a need after one of the deadliest hurricanes to reach the United States makes landfall in your state. Their most immediate concerns did not pertain to preserving information about this particular historical event, and why would they?

Cultural memory lives in spaces of conflict. Our remembrances of the past are always culturally framed: we remember things differently based upon who we are and what has happened. But the very nature of culture dictates that it is most often a site of contested--rather than shared--meaning. And in the context of Hurricane Katrina and its ensuing aftermath(s), these contestations were, and indeed still are predicated on matters of race, privilege, and power. The very way in which the event itself was framed—before, during, and after the storm made landfall had direct influence over the way in which it could then be remembered.

CHRONICLING FERGUSON & DOCUMENTING THE NOW

The first person to break the news about the shooting death of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, was not a journalist or a cable news reporter, but rather a group of Twitter users who practically live-Tweeted the event as it unfolded. Forty-five minutes after the shooting, Twitter user La'Toya Cash (@AyoMissDarkSkin), tweeted, "Ferguson police just executed an unarmed 17 yr old boy that was walking to the store. Shot him 10 times smh." Well before "#Ferguson" became both the digital and literal rallying cry behind what was happening in Missouri, the tweet garnered 3,500 retweets and was more widely referenced across Twitter as well as mainstream news outlets, than any other tweet following the event (Balon 18).

Within an hour of Brown's death, Twitter user eman.slumpert (@TheePharoah), tweeted, "I JUST SAW SOMEONE DIE OMFG". As Twitter had not yet rolled out the capability to thread tweets in 2014, @TheePharoah regularly updated the initial tweet, providing new information as the situation developed. He references the crime-scene perimeter put in place by the FPD, "Its blood all over the street, niggas protesting nshit [sic]. There is police tape all over my building. I am stuck in here omg," and even tweets a photo of Michael Brown's lifeless body lying face down in the street with the caption, "Fuckfuck fuck".

Indeed, information regarding the murder of Michael Brown and the civil unrest that ensued was disseminated primarily through Twitter. However, the content produced by individuals on Twitter, particularly those living in Ferguson like @AyoMissDarkSkin and @TheePharoah, not only served to chronicle the facts of the event, but also helped to establish a narrative of the event(s) that was somehow left out of yet simultaneously co-opted by mainstream news media. What is significant about these tweets is not that they were produced so rapidly or that they were so popular in the context of the event. Rather, a sense of agency is imbued by the platform through which they worked that helps to both frame and respond to the event. As such, these tweets come to constitute a particular memory of the events in Ferguson, and therefore need to be preserved in a way that recognizes their uniqueness in form (tweets) while also recognizing the sensitive nature of the information being chronicled.

Documenting the Now (DocNow), is a suite of "cloud-ready, open-source applications that will be used for collecting tweets and their associated metadata and web content," developed as a response to the public's increasing use of social media to

chronicle historically significant events (Sherkat 3). DocNow has two particular goals. The first is to create an open source web application that will allow archivists (and researchers) to collect, analyze, and preserve tweets in a relatively easy way. The second is to generate a discussion among archivists, activists, and scholars regarding the use of social media content. In particular, this project seeks to develop a more ethical way of approaching how to use this data, given its often-sensitive nature. While the central premise behind DocNow--using a/the social media outlet as a method of finding and preserving content produced on the web--is not necessarily unique to the project itself (TwitterVane, Events Archive, and iCrawl are examples of other projects doing similar work), the ethical dimensions of the project, particularly in its response to curation, privacy, and appraisal is substantially different.

The differences between the HDMB and DocNow transcend the mere idea that one of these technological tools is just more sophisticated than the other. One significant facet of DocNow that substantially distinguishes it from the HDMB is the way in which the individual is recognized in a far more considerable way. The HDMB, even if it was not nearly as robust as expected or desired, was always set up with the express purpose of aggregating as much user-generated information as possible regarding Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. While such a design is potentially useful for creating a crowd-sourced historical record of the event, it doesn't really do much for engaging with that information much beyond its initial recording. The narratives, images, and various other contributions to the HDMB and other digital memory banks don't accrete meaning merely by existing in some digital environment. As such, the HDMB has functioned merely as a site of collection, not of collective memory. On the other hand, DocNow's creation and

implementation acknowledges the dynamic nature of memory in general and digital memory more specifically through a sort of technologically embedded understanding. Given the way in which Twitter data, material almost inextricably linked to the user who creates it, takes precedence in the DocNow environment, DocNow prompts a continuous sense of return. Rather than acting as a mere container for particularized memories and contributions, DocNow centers the digital memory material produced by the individual in conversation with a broader sphere of engagement thus more closely mirroring what memory work looks like in general.

In what follows, I will first review the relevant literature, mostly that which pertains to theories of memory, particularly the relationship among collective and public memory discourses and the ways in which this project extends that work. I will then offer a detailed account of the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB), exploring its construction, implementation, and pitfalls in relation to previously outlined theories of memory. A section analyzing the ways in which DocNow both aligns with and departs from the construction, implementation, and pitfalls of the HDMB will follow. Finally, I conclude with an assessment of these two tools and how they create distinct memory systems that afford us a more contoured understanding of memory work in general that then might be utilized to facilitate an understanding of how to most productively respond to instances of event-based traumas in the future of digital memory work.

Insofar as the most ideal form of collective public memory is one that engages the public, exploring digital spaces affords us a deeper level of understanding about how these technologies both work and develop over time to reveal how power and race function in engaging in memory work. Particularly in the context of traumatic events like

Hurricane Katrina and Ferguson, wherein the failures of the democratic state itself demonstrate, quite extensively, that even if all men are created equal, the system into which they've been created recognizes them as more or less deserving of the 'advantages' of that democracy on the basis of race. If Hurricane Katrina was merely the catalyst for revealing the sort of infrastructural injustice that has plagued the black citizens of New Orleans since the city was founded, then the murder of Michael Brown can be understood as the bridge that brought us to the chorus of what we know and remember as #Ferguson.

Practices of memory have become enabled by, embedded within, and embodied through digital media technologies in a way that has worked to fundamentally alter various experiences of memory. These two digital tools are shown to demonstrate the ways in which they are both fundamentally mnemonic and fundamentally vernacular, and how such a construction has worked to facilitate the remembrance—or lack thereof—these particular events in both distinct and significant ways. I argue that these digital tools act upon premises of collective memory that are fundamentally linked to experiences of trauma, demonstrating a shift not only in the way in which we conceive of memory work but how they work might in turn respond to instances of trauma. As cultural memory works to dwell in spaces of conflict in order to both confront and analyze the past, it draws attention to the ways in which these tools reckon with the complex conditions under which traumatic memory is both registered and reckoned with. In moving from an understanding of memory as nothing more than a repository of inert meanings to a dynamic and complex process, the latter emphasizes the importance of action, agency, and affect when it comes to working through.

Here I would like to trace a fundamental understanding of the field of memory studies, paying particular attention to the concepts of collective memory and public memory, ultimately concluding with an assessment of what I perceive to be the future of memory studies in the context of technologies of memory, specifically the archive and digital memory technologies.

As Andreas Huyssen argues, "memory is one of those elusive topics we all think we have a handle on. But as soon we try to define it, it starts slipping and sliding, eluding attempts to grasp it either culturally, sociologically, or scientifically" (3). As such, I will not seek to offer any definitive scholarly understanding of memory. Rather, I would like to offer an attempt at discovering what can occur in the relationship between memory and the tools utilized to preserve it. However, it might be useful to first understand at least a small fraction of the somewhat extensive scholarly history of memory.

MEMORY STUDIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars recognize memory as dynamic, complex, and conflicted. Questions about memory are not merely about a record of the past and therefore involve nuanced, fundamental questions about things like social and political institutions. As such, the study of memory across disciplines and fields has coalesced into the creation of the interdisciplinary field of memory studies as a sort of catchall repository for any field that engages in any way with aspects of memory. As Roediger and Wertsch argue, "memory studies is too broad a field to have overarching theories to unify and attempt to explain the huge number of phenomena of interest" (8). Similarly, I don't seek to unify the conversation in, around, or about memory but instead call for a development in understanding regarding its uniqueness.

Indeed, memory is the most fundamental quality of an individual's experience--our memories make us who we are. However, the qualities that work to make memory unique are in some ways amorphous while simultaneously being rather universal. Given the way that memory often has the ability to exceed the individual, Olick and Robbins describe the then (1998) emerging field of social memory studies as a, "nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise" (106). As such, what we have come to recognize as "collective memory," has a rather long history, producing a vast literature across disciplines. Thus, there is little agreement as to what it might actually be. Most scholars trace the concept of collective memory back to French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who coined the term in his 1925 book, *On Collective Memory*. For Halbwachs, memory may be the fundamental link among how all of our minds work, a least common denominator, so to speak. However, these individualized points of memory--memories--are always situated within the context of particularized social frameworks. All of this is to say that for Halbwachs, it is impossible to separate individual memories from society thereby suggesting that all memory might in fact be collective.

In her foundational article on collective memory, "Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," Barbie Zelizer identifies six premises of collective memory. For the sake of this project, it might be useful to more closely examine three in particular: the processural, usable, and material elements of collective memory. The processural element of collective memory makes it particularly difficult to capture memory both in practice and also analysis. In seeing memory as a process, which is, "constantly unfolding," a distinction is made between current understandings of memory and the ways in which they challenge the previously held idea(s) that memory is

merely a solitary moment of experience (Zelizer 220). In fact, memory is a network of relationships, practically perpetually in flux, simultaneously exploring a multiplicity of timelines--past, present, future--and contexts--individuals and collectives. Thus, the processural quality of memory also establishes within it a sense of openness that makes it subject to change. While this openness and the sort of fluidity that often accompanies it can prompt contestations over previously undertaken memory work--radically differing accounts of the same event, for example--it is this very quality that establishes memory as a vibrant, almost living thing.

Stemming, in some ways from its processural qualities, collective memory is also usable. The shift from theorizing memory as something inherently individual to something robustly collective not only challenges how we think of memory as an experience, but also how the experience of that experience might then be translated into action. Or perhaps utilized as a catalyst for action. This particular facet of collective memory demonstrates the ways in which it responds to the conditions of the present.

In theorizing memory as material, Zelizer draws attention to the ways in which analyses of memory have long relied upon physical artifacts in order to both understand and further convey experiences of the past. Through public commemorations, monuments, memorials, museums, texts, and artifacts, these material experiences of individual points of memory have helped to establish a sense of collective memory of various events. However, as the way in which the very idea of what makes a memorial artifact continues to evolve, so too does the idea of materiality. In the context of this project in particular, the born digital artifacts submitted to and or collected from these digital spaces do not only reflect the materiality of memory. Indeed the media through

which they are represented--digital memory banks and Twitter respectively--also work to demonstrate significant developments in the idea of what can be reasonably understood as material. An acknowledgment of the ways in which the digital environment shapes these ideas of materiality in regard to memory is significant in that the media through which memory is expressed are, "definitive of and not merely secondary to the message," and are therefore instrumental to understanding how they function (Olick 98).

Insofar as this project is not necessarily interested in charting where work on memory has been, but rather where it currently finds itself and how it might continue to evolve in the future, these three elements seem to be most significant.

This idea of memory--as something that is both useful and usable--is relatively underexplored in the current scholarly formulation of memory. At the same time, "Collective memory" has become one of the emblematic terms and concerns of our age..." (Olick and Robbins 116). Zelizer points to the ways in which collective memory can be and often is divided. Given the unique qualities of memory itself, the same memory can be utilized to support disparate projects with divergent aims. These divisions can occur along a variety of lines, but one that creates considerable tension is that between official and vernacular memory, due in part to the ways in which both correspond closely to key facets of identity and its formation. Though scholars like Bodnar and Zelizer argue that on occasion vernacular memory discourses can and often are subsumed into official memory narratives, it is important to note that vernacular memory interests are constantly floating in and out of official memorial consciousnesses.

When one thinks of what memory most often looks like in practice, these things are often bound up in state-sponsored or state-sanctioned memorial efforts. Key examples

include physical memorials, museums, memorial museums, and state or university sponsored archives of an event, among others. However, these types of formalized memorial efforts don't always account for the range of nuanced responses that issue out of the particularized experience of the events, usually traumatic, seeking to be memorialized. When the official channels available are insufficient or nonexistent, however, memory work still happens. Vernacular memory, a term often associated with this type of memory work refers to the memory practice of "ordinary people" (Jorgensen-Earp 48). Seemingly an arbitrary term, these ordinary people are "preoccupied, instead, with defending the interests and rights of their respective social segments" (Bodnar 16). In practice, it is difficult to say what exactly this might look like in a macro sense, but in the context of Hurricane Katrina, the aforementioned Amazon reviews might gesture toward it.

Borrowing from Pierre Nora's assertion that 'modern memory' is "above all archival," Zelizer concludes by arguing that collective memory is material in a significant way (13). Relying upon substantial memorial artifacts such as memorials, monuments, museums, and texts among others, collective memory is in some way invested in providing a repository of the past designed for various levels of public engagement. As such, it is difficult to say whether or not public memory emerges out of collective memory or rather alongside it. Understanding memory as inherently social and therefore inherently collective has undoubtedly contributed to the field of memory studies, developing a considerable amount of literature that takes as its focus the relationship between identity formation and processes of collective memory.

The very idea of public memory has often been conceived of as synonymous to any of its many cognate terms. Some of these terms include cultural memory, racial memory, or social memory, among others. It is important to note, however, that each of these terms has a specific application and therefore within the context of this project, public memory is used to refer to the ongoing choices of a group of people in how they choose to remember a particular part of their history, locating that method in a broader context, while collective memory is used to refer to the shared pool of memories, knowledge, and information significantly associated with a particular group's identity (Olick and Robbins 118).

The relationship between memory and identity is particularly salient in the context of this project in that it explores memory practices issuing out of two event-based traumas that had significant implications for the ways in which identity was framed, performed, and responded to. While this had unique implications for the events in question, such a response is not particularly new. As Olick and Robbins suggest, writing at the nascence of memory studies, memory sites and memory practices have long been considered, "central loci for ongoing struggles over identity" (28). This assertion has been elaborated upon by many scholars including David Thelen who suggests that, "questions about the construction of memory can illuminate how individuals, ethnic groups, political parties, and cultures shape and reshape their identities—as known to themselves and to others" (1118).

To return to the origins of memory studies with regard to the memory's relationship to identity, it is important to note that Halbwachs argues that collective memories are always created through the outright manipulation of elites and are then

subsequently internalized by members of society. As such, the social frameworks under which collective memory is created shape not only individual memories but also the larger memory complex under which significant events are experienced and remembered--and even perhaps forgotten, as the case may be. Elisabeth Jelin, in addressing Halbwachs' work, argues that these social frameworks reflect, "the general representations of society..." (11). The act of forgetting is not limited to a particular event or facet thereof. Rather, this forgetting actually corresponds to, and indeed might even spur on, a loss of these social frameworks. As such, individual memories occur less as recollections and more as reconstructions that reflect a particular milieu. As a result, collective memory is a non-linear, non-structured account of the past in which, "the present contains and constructs past experience and future expectations" (Jelin 4).

Questions of public memory are not so much about a record of the past, "but serious matters in the present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both official and vernacular cultures" (Bodnar 15). In this particular treatment of memory, we are more invested in looking forward rather than reaching back. Through recognizing the present-ness of memory work, "public memory entails the acts and processes, through which memories move beyond the remembering individual and become shared, passed on, and in this way, form a broader network through which people gather a sense of collectivity" (Houdek and Phillips 1).

Memory scholars argue that an objective past is impossible and therefore the only tenable theory of memory is one that captures its consistently variable nature. In "Memory, History and the Claims of the Past," Ross Poole sums this up quite elegantly when he writes, "if the goal of history is that it be written in third person, memory is

always written in first person" (159). Through the acknowledgment that memory is authored through the subjective lens of the individual, the work of memory scholars often emphasizes the ineluctable relationship between memory and identity. In this particular project, then, it is important to underscore the fact that in these distinct, yet similar cases, experiences of identity and historical memory coalesce precisely at a point of trauma, which echoes what Cathy Caruth suggests: "history is precisely the way in which we are implicated in each other's traumas" (9). This is significant in understanding how we might think through the collective, social, and cultural dimensions of memory, particularly when they correspond to a traumatic event coupled with a development in new technologies of remembering.

Undoubtedly, conceptions of memory have been altered in the context of present-day technologies, particularly with regard to social media. Over time, these technologies have been developed for a multiplicity of reasons, but have in some ways worked to simultaneously establish a sense of the individual as the author of their own lives and connections while facilitating a space in which all that is being created can be formally remembered at a later moment. Thus, what might appear to be a highly singular or particularized moment is always produced and experienced within the confines of a social digital dimension. In the context of digital memory banks, contributions (and therefore contributors) are both enabled and limited by the structure of the digital memory bank.

While the memory bank itself provides the opportunity to contribute narratives, images, and other born digital content to the archive, it also provides a specific parameters regarding the shape and form these contributions can take. Additionally, these contributions are not only embedded within this digital environment, they're also subject

to being affected by it. This reflects what Ekaterina Haskins discusses in her essay, "Public Memory in a Digital Age," acknowledging that, through the digital more broadly, but also with regard to these technologies specifically, "all kinds of stories can now become part of an evolving patchwork of public memory" (405). This relatively new phenomena is actually integral to the very fundamental aspects of how we conceive of collective memory, "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs 43). This is to say that our memories are not only recollected through particular social frameworks but must also be recognized as collectable in the first place by those very same constructions. Online memory making, therefore, democratizes a certain aspect of memory work, while other aspects might instead remain true to the "traditional dictatorial role of official institutions of memory" (Haskins 419). In both establishing and understanding the social frameworks that create and challenge memory, we can begin to understand how memory functions in the broader social context of engaging with it.

As Andreas Huyssen argues, memory is both representation and re-presentation of the past in the present. Since "memory is readily and dynamically configured through our digital practices and the connectivity of our networks. The increasingly digital networking of memory not only functions in a continuous present but is also a distinctive shaper of a new mediatized age of memory, " which is particularly salient in the context of this project in terms of exploring distinctly digital phenomena like Twitter and digital memory banks (Hoskins 96). The media through which memory is expressed are always already integral to that which they are expressing, and therefore digital media has helped to create, "new spaces, platforms, and activities for public memory" (Savoie 11). While

popular approaches to memory rely upon the assumption that media technologies merely inscribe and store memory, the particular technologies centered in this project challenge that assertion completely. The digital thus helps to establish, "...a model of memory as a fluid, inclusive, and open-ended process, rather than a fixed and exclusionary narrative, embracing the possibility that the intersection of disparate commemorative discourses might offer an opportunity to forget empathic communities of remembrance across national, cultural, or ethnic boundaries" (Bond, Craps, Vermuelen 6).

THE HDMB IN PRACTICE

Starting in the late 1990s, digital memory banking began as an outgrowth of oral history practices in an effort to identify potential subjects to interview. One of the first digital memory banks was The Blackout History Project (blackout.gmu.edu), also developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. This project invited visitors to complete an online survey in order to tell their stories about the experience of living through the Northeastern Blackouts of 1965 and 1977. This project was the first of many for the RRCHNM in terms of digital collecting projects which has included the ECHO project, the September 11th Digital Archive, and GULAG among others.

Digital memory banks are interesting for a litany of reasons, but one of the most significant in the context of this project is the fact that they are seen as a sort of archive of the future. Unlike traditional archives which are usually brick and mortar and/or paper-based institutions, digital memory banks have begun to both create a narrative and maintain knowledge of key historical events in a more de-centralized and perhaps

democratic way. By facilitating a space in which repositories of memory can be more easily accessed and therefore interacted with, digital memory banks promote a vision of enabling memory work to take place in a variety of places and across varying contexts. While archiving in some sense still requires some sort of hands-on appraising, digital memory banks, particularly in the case of the HDMB are mostly interested in born-digital artifacts.

The HDMB is the second effort to make a digital archive from born digital material, the first being the September 11th Digital Archive. As such, the HDMB solicited various types of digital contributions including images, outside links, maps, and other files, including narratives typed directly into a web-based form. The easiest way to explore the HDMB is through the "Browse" link on the landing page through which a user is then redirected to select from a variety of categories that correspond to the genre of the material submitted--stories, images, etc.

The HDMB stopped collecting submissions shortly after the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which is in some ways understandable after the flow of contributions to the archive slowed and then stopped. However, such a decision ignores the sort of historical and future memorial impact of continuing the discourse around the event.

All told, the HDMB yielded 25,000 digital objects in the form of 1,300 personal reflections, almost 14,000 images, and more than 7,000 other digital files. It is important to mention that HDMB contains material almost exclusively from those who had some sort of direct connection to the storms--individuals who chose not to or perhaps could not, for whatever reason, evacuate, those who evacuated and were then relocated, those who evacuated and then returned to nothing, etc. It also specifies an expansive audience;

"we welcome contributions from survivors, first responders, relief workers, family, friends, and anyone with reflections on the hurricanes and their aftermath." In comparison to the September 11th Digital Archive, which had thousands of indirect contributions from individuals who were not even living in America at the time of the attacks, in the context of the HDMB itself, Hurricane Katrina was positioned as a much less significant event and the relative lack of memorial engagement with it demonstrates the extent to which this was the case. While the 25,000 digital objects in the HDMB might seem like a significant body of contributions, this can be read in comparison to the 150,000 digital objects incorporated in the September 11th Digital Archive. A rather paltry collection in this context.

In an essay titled, "Why Collecting History Online is Web 1.5," Brennan and Kelly admit that given the volume of digital objects submitted to the HDMB, especially in comparison to their previous project, the September 11th Digital Archive, "the project did not live up to [our] expectations" (2). They continue, "our experiences with the September 11th Digital Archive had taught us a lot about collecting history online and so we expected that like the very successful earlier project, the HDMB would take off quickly and would rapidly become a central digital archive of original sources, many of which disappear almost as quickly as they are created" (5). What is significant about Brennan and Kelly's assessment here is that they demonstrate the acute awareness that almost all of these memory-banking projects fail. If success is measured by the ability of these digital archives to collect information, memories, and testimonies not just within the confines of a sort of static memory warehouse, but rather to enable them to be returned to and interacted with, then the only project that has had any sort of success *is*

the September 11th Digital Archive. In a cache of several similar projects, I think Brennan and Kelly's reflection belies a sense that these projects *should* last. They're interesting, often at least somewhat visually appealing, and seemingly not irreparably flawed in terms of infrastructure and usability. And yet, almost none of them have received any sustained engagement.

In a blog post on the future of memory banking written in May of 2013, Sheila Brennan writes, "People are sharing quite a bit within their own networks, and within networks that have specific terms of service. Will they want to share again in another web space?" It's a significant question, because it's at many ways at the heart of what drives--or perhaps does not drive--memory banks. In this post she goes on to write about the nature of digital memory banks--how they began, the projects that RRCHNM has built, the volume of information contributed to these projects. These projects have considerable potential for doing really interesting things regarding memory work, establishing significant events and then providing a space for people to respond to them, but instead they merely act as a glutton for data.

All of them look mostly the same--there's a banner image that depicts, or at least closely corresponds to the event for which the digital memory bank was constructed. In the case of the HDMB it's a map of Louisiana, for the September 11th Digital Archive it's a clip art rendering of the Twin Towers, for the April 16th Archive set up in remembrance of the Virginia Tech shooting it's a photo of a candle-light vigil. This iconography both demonstrates and reinforces the extent to which these digital memory banks are almost always constructed in response to an event-based trauma.

For the most part, these projects are built on Omeka, which is an open-source, web-based publishing program designed for displaying library, museum, archival and otherwise scholarly collections. And each site is outfitted with a contribution plugin that allows anyone connecting with the site to contribute content as they see fit. Some of them are easier to navigate than others, due mostly to the technological moment in which some were created--the HDMB for example certainly looks like a byproduct of early 2000s web page development, while the September 11th Digital Archive, which is more rigorously maintained, looks a bit more current. They all offer similar navigation qualities--search bars and category tabs.

If, as Derrida argues, the archive "produces as much as it records the event," then it seems as though the relative lack of engagement with these digital memory banks says something significant about the ways in which we remember the events they seek to chronicle (17). Given that the archive and the technologies through which it is created define the event that is being archived, it thereby produces the ways in which the future can conceive of particular memories of the past. These projects miss the mark in some considerable way because the ways in which they're designed seek to enable their use as tools for history. However, these projects are in fact asking questions about memory. While the line between the two is indeed deceptively difficult to parse, such a distinction, however subtle, requires a different attunement to what is being collected.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the HDMB is not called an archive, but instead a 'memory bank.' While this subtle difference in nomenclature might seem insignificant insofar as a/the memory bank does seem to function in a manner similar to what we conceive of archives doing, it belies a certain delegitimization of the

HDMB as a formal archival enterprise while simultaneously centering the role of memory in the project. While archives are just one of many technologies of cultural memory, they are regarded as, "the moment of fact assembly," and are therefore considered of paramount significance when it comes to constructing both our record and understanding of importance of historical events (Trouillot 26). As such, referring to this collection of artifacts as a 'memory bank,' instead of an archive gestures towards the way in which public memory of this event was always already secondary in the broader context of public consciousness. On the other hand, emphasizing the role of memory as integral to the HDMB through its terming, opens up the project to being understood as contributing a democratizing element to formalized memorial efforts.

An interesting feature of the HDMB, which is absent from most digital memory banks and archives in general offers contributors the option to tag submissions, "a freeform way to categorize items, which is being used on a growing number of websites." Certainly, this is a feature of the HDMB that corresponds most closely to the spot it occupies on the digital timeline in terms of its design and implementation. However, this feature does significant work for the HDMB's ability to engage memory work in a significant way. Within the environment of the HDMB, "a tag can refer to a general category or description...or to a concept. An item can be tagged with as many, or as few tags as seem useful to you." The ability of users to affix a tag to their contributions to the HDMB means that they could self-catalogue their submissions.

On one hand, this may have meant (and, combing through the submissions, this seems to in some ways be the case) that the option to tag a reflection with any sort of word or phrase could create a vertiginous volume of entries that have nothing to do with

one another but are catalogued similarly. This creates a sense of confusion and disorientation that makes it difficult to differentiate among information and testimonies incorporated in the HDMB. An example of this is the use of the tag, "our apartment." Clicking on the tag generates three separate photographs, all three depicting different apartments. Given that many submissions are anonymous, despite the option to claim them as one's own, the lack of ability to differentiate between the narratives regarding these distinct apartments sublimates all three into the broader narrative of Katrina, condensing them into one experience. Since the tags are user-generated, two contributors can author a similar experience and tag it differently. This is the case most frequently for tags that correspond to landmarks that are difficult to spell: 'ponchartrain [sic],' versus 'pontchartrain,' versus, 'ponchatrain [sic]' ("Tags", Hurricane Digital Memory Bank). Another example is a similar image of New Orleans' iconic Canal St., one tagged "canal st," the other tagged "canal st." which the HDMB recognizes as two distinct tags.

On the other hand, this system of tagging is significant in the sort of agency it affords contributors in framing their own story. It also means that in some cases, the material incorporated in the memory bank can more easily be categorized alongside similar material—thematically, regionally, descriptively. At once tagging is therapeutic and disruptive—simultaneously offering agency while challenging dominant narratives concocted by others and also the idea that all individual memories of a particular event must be subsumed into a particular collective sense of that same memory.

The tags perform significant memory work in that they demonstrate the processural, usable, and material aspects of collective memory in simultaneity. These tags are processural in that they are created within the context of one person's contribution but

evolve alongside the other contributions embedded in the collection. They are usable in the sense that a tag can be purposed and re-purposed for a variety of contributions thus reflecting what Zelizer argues that, "the same memory can act as a particular representation of the past for certain groups while taking on a universal significance for others," demonstrating a point at which the processural and usable qualities of memory come together (230). Ultimately, their materiality is granted through their form and structure as a tag in the context of the digital environment in which they were created and how they then function in that space.

On the HDMB's about page, Sheila Brennan and Mills Kelly, two of the project managers of the HDMB write, "...We hope to foster some positive legacies by allowing the people affected by these storms to tell their stories in their own words..." This is significant in that it demonstrates a sensitivity regarding the nature of the memory of the storm. Following Hurricane Katrina, the narratives coming out of the Gulf were mostly constructed by eyewitness accounts of journalists sent to Louisiana, many of which substantiated problematic narratives regarding race and criminality. As such, when it came to trying to convince those affected by the storm to contribute to the HDMB, the project team had an understandably difficult time. In a blog post titled, "What's Next for Digital Memory Banks" Brennan reflected on the sort of grassroots work the HDMB outreach team had to do in, "pointing people to the website's URL, ensuring the trustworthiness of the site and offering a personal connection to an impersonal web space" (Brennan 1). This included a couple of specific efforts that spoke to the particular vernacular modes of memory that seemed to be especially important in the context of this incident.

One key way in which the HDMB staff implemented strategic methods of getting contributions involved a key hallmark of New Orleans publicity. In the first Mardi Gras celebration following the storm (2006), the HDMB staff printed the memory bank logo and website information on thousands of plastic cups that were then thrown from the floats in the annual Mardi Gras parades. This is a typical facet of Mardi Gras parades--beads, cups, various tchotchkes used to commemorate the event. But following Katrina, "most people lost all of their dishes during the storm, so the cups were even more important" (Mizell-Nelson qtd in Rivard 209). As such, without dishes, the HDMB throw cups became a household staple. Additionally, the HDMB staff also strategically exploited the already fraught relationship between the citizens of New Orleans and their government.

In the above poster, which was widely disseminated across New Orleans, HDMB staff shrewdly employed the x-code as a visual metaphor in order to generate more interest and more content for the HDMB. X-Codes, commonly used in urban search and rescue efforts, were prolific in post-Katrina operations and were emblazoned on many of the homes affected by the storm. These x-codes tell stories that are not only intimately and intricately bound up in place, but stories that are also extremely susceptible to erasure. As such, the repetition of the same red x-code fading more each time it is reproduced on the poster gestures toward an element of precarity when it comes to collecting memories. What's more is that while the paint of the x-codes may fade, entrusting one's "story," to the archive can be done autonomously without fear that that narrative will be in some way re-framed or co-opted by the media. It is significant that

the HDMB staff chose to incorporate the fact that, "Copyrights for individual submissions and collections are retained by the original creators," demonstrating that not only will the archive endure, but so will the rights to the story contributed to said archive imbuing the contributor with a sense of agency that had been all but destroyed following the traumatic event of the storm and its aftermath.

According to the National Hurricane Center, more than 1,800 people died in Hurricane Katrina. 2,000 people were still considered missing almost a year after the storm, more than 770,000 people were displaced, over 300,000 homes were considered destroyed and the storms caused roughly \$81 billion in damages. It was the most expensive hurricane in United States history. The HDMB contains almost 14 thousand images, which constitutes more than half of the overall collection of the HDMB. This is significant because in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the images of destruction that came out of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region in general became an appropriate stand-in for any sort of nuanced narrative of the experience of the storm or what happened after it.

As Blouin and Rosenberg argue, "The archive itself is not simply a reflection or an image of an event but also shapes the event, the phenomena of its origins" (18). One of the most comprehensive dimensions of the HDMB is the collection of photographs and images. As mentioned before, this material constitutes the bulk of the HDMB and does significant work for establishing an understanding of what happened in New Orleans following Katrina, but in a very specific way. Many of the photographs incorporated into the HDMB chronicle the material wreckage of the event. If you select, "Images," through the "Items," tab, almost all of the pages of images feature a preponderance of photos

depicting carnage. Flooded homes, wrecked infrastructures, overturned cars, standing water, dead animals, are all readily available images. Additionally, the "Featured Image," aspect of the HDMB populates a new image every so often when you visit the landing page, while it's a somewhat small box on the left-hand corner of the site, it's the viscosity of seeing the trauma that draws a user in. As such, these visual representations are then collapsed into what many people remember of the event. As such, the HDMB unwittingly acts as a repository of digital images centrally focused on destruction for voyeuristic engagement. This centering of images depicting the physical damage left by Katrina works to establish that, "frameworks for the selection, collection, arrangement and description, preservation and accessibility of archives are, therefore, closely linked to societal processes of remembering and forgetting, inclusion and exclusion, and the power relationship they embody. In this sense, archives are always political sites of contested memory and knowledge" (McKemmish, Gilliland-Swetland, and Ketelaar 2).

DOCUMENTING THE NOW, NOW

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) annual meeting convened in Washington, D.C. on August 10, 2014, the day after the shooting of Michael Brown. Many attending the conference--including Bergis Jules and Ed Summers--watched the events in Ferguson unfold on social media through many channels including Instagram, Youtube, Vine, and Twitter. Digital spaces are among one of few spaces in which marginalized communities have carved out robust spaces for themselves that have flourished, and in this regard, Twitter is no exception. In particular, conversations on Twitter drew attention to the ways in which mainstream media was covering the event

and then challenging and even correcting these narratives, establishing itself as a really powerful tool in the context of Ferguson, yes, but also in general.

Twitter is most useful in the present--both in terms of how we can use it to understand the ways an event might be unfolding in real time and also because of the way access to previously tweeted tweets is restricted, thereby limiting what can and cannot be collected in the context of preserving Twitter material. It was at this conference that Jules and Summers, two of the lead developers of the project DocNow, began considering the ways in which the digital material being produced in the wake of Ferguson demanded recognition and archivization, but also posed a number of questions about how best to do that work. These questions ranged from how to best preserve tweets with regard to their relatively unique form, to what the implications of making this data publicly available could have. Following the decision to begin archiving the data--a massive amount of hashtags, tweets, and photos--the project was initially met with an overwhelmingly negative response.

Jules noted that in pushback against the project, people were "questioning how we were applying care to archiving traumatizing content...we forgot the human beings in the process." Herein resides the central tension when it comes to question of memory work, and, perhaps more significantly, memory work that attempts to respond to a traumatic event. What's at stake in projects like DocNow is not just the collection of that data, which often exists in a born-digital form, and proving it to be as important preserving written/physical artifacts that emerge out of similarly traumatic events. Rather, it is to work to understand the nuances of the digital space as one in which people both produce and interact with memory work in ways that allow them to experience traumatic events

and subsequently the memories attached to them in new and different ways. Jules elaborates that in the case of documenting Ferguson, "we want historical events to be remembered from the perspectives of the people on the ground" (Addo 2). This notion of returning the narrative of the event to the people who were involved in/with or witnessed it is significant as it establishes these people as the arbiters of their own story, people who might not have a large platform, but who, "could be among the most important voices of a historical event" (Addo 1).

While not originally developed for such a purpose, Twitter has recently and frequently been used as a form of emergency communication for both the acknowledgment and dissemination of breaking news. If the main goal of social media is to utilize mediated technologies in effort both create and proliferate conversation, then Twitter's specific purpose is to put the proverbial ear to the door of such conversations while broadcasting that content through a bullhorn. As such, Twitter has become a digital space in which people can quite literally crowd-source responses to catastrophe, acting as both spokesperson and critic in simultaneity.

Given Twitter's infrastructure, the main function of the service is not just to talk to or with other people and follow those conversations, but to enable individuals (users) to know about those conversations even if, perhaps especially if, those conversations don't pertain to them. In the case of collecting Twitter data that pertained to the death of Michael Brown and the events that followed in Ferguson, the challenges regarding preservation were significant. Of particular importance was the fact that through the data gathered from Twitter, archivists were at once constructing a ledger of events while simultaneously constructing a community that both contributed to and were affected by

those events. As such, this data became particularly sensitive in that it developed a space in which marginalized voices could be heard while also subjecting those same voices to additional scrutiny from within the confines of an already hostile environment.

The United States government has had a long and well-documented history of surveilling activists, particularly activists of color in effort to curb dissent and protest. In an era in which activism is taking place in places other than the streets, most readily in online environments, the prevalence of surveillance in these spaces is of particular concern. While Twitter has had a longstanding policy of prohibiting the sale of data to government agencies for surveillance purposes, police have tracked many protests through the platform, including the ones that ensued after the deaths of Michael Brown and Freddie Gray. Within two weeks of the death of Michael Brown, more than 13 million tweets had been produced in response to the event. While the DocNow project does seek to generate and sustain critical conversation about the collection of social media content for archival purposes, it is important to note the ways in which the project has worked to undertake particular ethical considerations.

DocNow began as Documenting Ferguson (<http://digital.wustl.edu/ferguson/>), "a freely available resource that seeks to preserve and make accessible the digital media captured and created by community members following the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014." It is worth noting that the landing page for Documenting Ferguson looks much like a digital memory bank, and seems to perform similar, if not equivalent functions. The collection is comprised of images, video, audio, artwork, personal narratives, all of which are related to Ferguson in some way. The main goal of Documenting Ferguson is, according to Smith, "to keep adding to it" (Addo 1).

And this point is not only where Documenting Ferguson and DocNow seem to diverge, it is also the point at which we can see how digital memory banking projects often fail. The continual accretion of material might make these projects more robust, but it also makes them unwieldy. And if the goal of memory work is to be understood as a lived, animate experience, then these inert, somewhat clunky storehouses make it difficult to engage with memory in any sort of meaningful way. In the case of DocNow, in contrast, the developers of the project aren't merely interested in acquiring as much data as possible. Rather, the suite seems to function by providing tools that will both facilitate and sustain this work. In many ways, one could read DocNow as a sort of extension and subsequent animation of the work done by digital memory banks. Referred to as the 'archive of the future,' DocNow has established itself as a project that looks back while reaching forward (Bennett, Doshi, Hagenmaier, and Roscoe).

While the impulse to remember is significant and fundamental to what makes us human, it often ends up putting memory work at cross purposes, challenging the ability to perform such a task. Prior to the full development of DocNow, there were/are tools and apps that could and indeed did compile of ton of data/material about/on a single historical event. However, cost and technology often emerge as limiting factors when it comes to both suitability and sustainability of such projects. This echoes what Mills Kelly, one of the developers on the HDMB said in an e-mail, "...to keep the site live, we had to move it...We'd clean it up if we could, but no one will give us the money for what amounts to digital grunt work." Here Kelly is referencing the decision to shift the HDMB from its original platform on SiteBuilder into Omeka, an open-source web-publishing platform more suitable for, "cultural heritage projects."

It is often assumed, and wrongly so, that digital archiving is more urgent due to the ephemerality of the material sought to be preserved in these projects. With every new tweet about a trending issue, an older one is pushed closer to the bottom of Twitter's, "Latest," tab. However, archiving has always been about this very issue of ephemerality. Even if the material being preserved is a physical artifact, the impulse to archive is about taking something precarious and attempting to make it as permanent as possible. But nothing lasts forever, especially not memory. Meredith Clark, one of the DocNow advisory board members suggests that, "one of the things we aim to do is to help communities think about how they want to capture that information and how they want to use it" (Reid 1). Information in this sense refers to the points of collective memory constructed through the use of social media platforms like Twitter. Here I'd like to emphasize two key elements of Clark's point--community and use.

As previously established, part of what makes collective memory collective is its ability to be used. Through the way in which collective memory provides narratives about the past, it can and often is used as a tool for mobilizing collective identity. This is obviously useful in a political sense, broadly in the context of war or other conflicts. Specifically in the case of Ferguson, the proliferation and utilization of Twitter data was and is significant because of the way in which it built both a community and a narrative for that community that directly challenged the dominant racist discourses that emerged following the murder of Michael Brown.

CONCLUSION

In a recent blog post by The Mellon Foundation, the key funder of the DocNow project, Bergis Jules was quoted as saying, "We are building tools and designing processes for people to [build archives] ethically." The developers' keen attunement to the particularities of the community they are trying to serve in rolling out these tools is significant in that it gestures towards the way in which these tools can and indeed will be used in the future. Often times these sorts of tools seem to be developed in somewhat of a vacuum thereby limiting their potential to be actually useful for the people who need or interact with them. In developing these tools alongside the data with which they are going to be used, there's a sort of mutual imbrication between the people who are using the tools and the tools themselves, something that is significant when it comes to both dealing with and exploring something as sticky as memory.

Jules further contextualizes this work in the language of "arming communities to do archival work," which is an interesting linguistic choice. At once it demonstrates the ways in which these particular communities exist in a perpetual state of being woefully disadvantaged while simultaneously drawing attention to the sort of pervasive infrastructural violence against members of this community, black men in particular. As such, Jules' remarks defer to the very memory of the death of Michael Brown while simultaneously contextualizing the stakes of the DocNow project in a powerful way. One of the key missions behind the project, aside from developing a more ethical archival practice, is enabling people who make use of this data to see that data, tweets in particular in this case, as something that is more significant than data points. While seemingly banal and/or innocuous facets of our increasingly digital forms of communication, the tweets collected within Documenting Ferguson project constitute significant connections

enabling people who were present (and those who weren't) to counter feelings of erasure and isolation following this traumatic event.

In this project, both the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB) and Documenting the Now have been figured as important technologies of cultural memory, facilitating the creation of complex sites under which struggles have been waged in order to give meaning to particular traumatic events of the past.

In her work on memory, Macarena Gomez-Barris has referred to the broader pastiche of memory and all of its machinations as a "memory symbolic," in which "the national public sphere...is mediated and constructed by state-led initiatives...and alternative forms of memory that reconstruct the past...with presentist interests in mind" (5). The tools examined in this project, in distinct ways, constitute such a symbolic. This project has thus shown the ways in which cultural memories of the traumatic events of Hurricane Katrina and Ferguson, as well as their aftermaths, activated particular narratives regarding the communities most impacted by these events and worked to rearticulate them based upon the affordances granted by their varying functions.

In some ways, the HDMB came to function as a small space of resistance in the permission it gave to victims of Katrina to tell their own stories, even as the larger circumstances under which they found themselves were continually defined and re-defined by racist media and governmental frames. Given that almost all of the submissions to the HDMB were from New Orleanians and other Gulf Coast citizens directly affected by the storm, the limited variety of the contributions to HDMB works against its ability to be recognized as a robust digital archive. However, in so doing it also draws attention to the ways in which the residents of the Gulf Coast bonded together,

instilling a sense of community amidst devastation, neglect, isolation, and, in some cases, erasure. While DocNow is primarily a resource for archivists that allows them to both discover web resources--in the case of Ferguson in particular, tweets--and discern the extent to which it would be appropriate and/or necessary to archive them, the significance of such a set of tools gestures towards a more robust understanding of archival work in practice.

In the case of archival tools like the HDMB and digital memory banks more generally, these digital artifacts act as a sort of inert repository of meaning. Indeed they might serve a purpose in the immediate aftermath of an event as a space in which people can deposit their particular memories regarding the experience of an incident. However, in a time in which many of our practices are already digitized, this sort of activity is already occurring in other places where the impact is greater and/or more significant. A case in point would be the Amazon reviews I mentioned in the introduction of this paper. While archival efforts are significant in creating a formalized narrative of an event, they often sanitize the nuanced, lived experiences of that memory.

It is important to note that memory is both a capacity and an ability--in its capacity; memory has the power to both hold and receive the past. In its ability, memory's power is located in the act of doing, responding to and making sense of the past in order to produce something in the present. As such, memory is both a thing and a process--functioning in a multiplicity of contexts in order to perform a variety of functions. Indeed then, the future of memory might be to see it as work in a way that hearkens back to its origins, emphasizing the ways in which its processural, usable, material manifestations

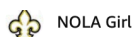
emerge from the mutual imbrication of practices, technological or otherwise, and their ability to respond to lived experiences.

It is a seemingly impossible dance--in order to remember certain things, we must forget others, and in effort to forget other things we must create new memories. All of which is to say that in the sea of all of this memorial information, it becomes necessary, perhaps urgently so, to develop different and/or distinct practices to respond to it. This is where the digital tools we have at our disposal, the ones explored in this project, and not merely the ones explicitly designed to do such work, are useful interventions. As J. Roger Kurtz suggests, in our current moment, "the ways that we represent or memorialize trauma" might in fact be better understood, "...through digital technology" (10). The mnemonic practices embedded within these technologies produce memory as a force that invents spaces for memorializing, thereby working to transform a traumatic past into a productive future.

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B



NOLA Girl

★★★★★ **Again and Again I read his "Thank You America"**

September 23, 2015

Format: Paperback | [Verified Purchase](#)

I lived in Lakeview - the New Orleans area where the first levee breach occurred. My home had 12 feet of water that marinated for 3 1/2 weeks all of our collections of memories and treasures in the regurgitated sewage and gumbo of garage liquids and cleaning fluids, gasoline, oil and whatever solubles the unleashed Lake Pontchartrain picked up along the way. The book brought back color to many of my memories that had taken on a kind of grayscale color in repressed memory. Some of the memories were painful - some had me laughing out loud (when our mayor dubbed us the "Chocolate City" and Rose dubbed him Willy Wonka). But the biggest emotional lump in my chest came with the poignant thank you letter where Rose thanked the 500,000 or maybe even a million fellow Americans that stepped up to take us in, to refuse payment for the bag of candy to help get the kids through 8 MORE hours in the stop and go evacuation traffic, to truck in piles of cases of water when FEMA was wherever they went on whatever wrong turn they took that did not lead to New Orleans. So, I cannot do it better than Chris Rose did - so I just add my thank you - for the pile of pillows one family gave us, for the school backpacks and school supplies, for the shampoo and pajamas, for the hugs when the sobs would not let the words get past. The words are beautifully said by Chris Rose - and from me too - Thank you

APPENDIX C



Kevin Law

★★★★★ The single best Katrina book out there.

July 14, 2009

Format: Paperback

I live in New Orleans, and my wife and I lost everything we owned in Hurricane Katrina. However, we evacuated safely the Saturday before the flood, and so were spared the horror of the flooding and its aftermath. It's a measure of how bad things were around here that we lost every single thing we owned (except for 5 days worth of clothing, and a few toiletries), but we feel like we're some of the lucky ones, because so many people had (and still have) it so much worse. Not to mention, of course, the 1300+ people who died as a result of the failure of the levees.

Since the storm, I have had a semi-obsession with books about Katrina. I have read 6 or 7 so far. And while there are plenty of books that have a lot more actual information about the storm, down to almost minute-by-minute chronologies, there is NO other book that even comes close to this one in terms of describing what it was like to actually live here after Katrina.

Before the storm, I actually didn't read Chris Rose's column in our paper. He wrote mostly humorous pieces that didn't interest me much. After the storm, I was absolutely riveted to his columns as I read them online from Dallas, where we were evacuated to for 4 months. If you want a history of the storm, what happened, when it happened, and why, then buy another book. But if you want to know what people went through AFTER the storm, you won't find a better book than this.

Chris Rose absolutely deserved his Pulitzer nomination.

5 people found this helpful

APPENDIX D



Marion Gagliano

★★★★★ **This book makes you feel like you lived Katrina**

June 11, 2013

Format: Paperback

First let me say... I am from New Orleans. We evacuated to Houston,Texas as part of a mandatory evacuation. I spent much of my time sitting in the lobby of the hotel watching national coverage of the devastation of the levee failures. After returning home 3weeks later; I found my home and car to be a total loss. For months, i felt that I had survived the emotional trauma that most residents had suffered. About 3 months after Katrina, I suddenly was hit by a wave of depression. It is hard to see your city devastated and struggling to jump through mounds of red tape involved in rebuilding your life and city.

This brings me to this book. After reading One Dead In The Attic; I began to heal. Mr.Rose places you in a day by day realization of what happens to your mind when your world has been turned upside down, I was riveted to this book. He bring you through life after the storm. This book makes you feel like you lived the horror that was Katrina. I recommend this book highly.

I am sure that the people from New York would have been more aware to the dangers of hurricanes; if they had read this book. Thanks, Mr. Rose.

Helpful

| [Comment](#)| [Report abuse](#)

APPENDIX E



Amazon Customer

★★★★★ Chris Rose is an awesome writer.

April 7, 2017

Format: Paperback

I am from New Orleans, cried through the entire book, but Chris told the true tale of what we experienced with love and hope.

One person found this helpful

Helpful

| [Comment](#)| [Report abuse](#)

APPENDIX F



Chef RaiMichelle 🍀
@RaiiMichelle

Smh “@AyoMissDarkSkin @Chief_Ki A 17 yr old boy got caught shoplifting and ran. The cops shot him 10 times. He was unarmed.”



5:55 PM - Aug 9, 2014



APPENDIX G



eman.slumpert
@TheePharoah

Follow



I JUST SAW SOMEONE DIE OMFG

10:03 AM - 9 Aug 2014

916 Retweets 435 Likes



32



916



435



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