



Across the Disciplines

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Language, Learning and Academic Writing

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Call for Proposals

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Unsettling Archival Research Across the Disciplines: Engaging Critical, Communal, and Digital Archives

Guest editors: Gesa Kirsch, Caitlin Burns, and Dakoda P. Smith, University of Louisville

This special issue of *Across the Disciplines* invites scholars to explore what it means to unsettle archival research across the disciplines. Efforts have long been underway to decolonize archival work and archival holdings, to repatriate artifacts, to change derogatory terms in finding aids, to consult with community members about appropriate protection of sacred artifacts, and to heal and reconcile in the wake of wounded/wounding histories (Till; Brasher et al.). Much work has attended to unsettling and wrestling with archives. From one perspective, settler archives are a storehouse for the West's fictions and myths and a premier site of production for colonial difference, demanding a recovery of absences and silences (García). Yet, despite these important interventions, institutional archives with colonial roots continue to grow, collecting artifacts outside of the communities to which they belong; university archives continue to occupy Native American lands; and governments and corporations surveil our behavior and organize our personal data into digital archives, often with harmful consequences. Such institutions often remain wound(ed/ing) spaces and places.

This special issue of *ATD* welcomes both critiques of archiving as a set of institutional practices, ideologies, and conventions, and new tactics of critical, communal, and digital archiving within and against those systems of power. We invite scholars to highlight critical, communal, and digital approaches to archival work, to consider how radical political approaches might support them, to reflect on how to counteract and resist racist, colonial histories, and to explore alternatives, perhaps through decolonial, engaged, reciprocal, or collaborative archival practices. We encourage scholars to consider multimodal and digital technologies (Enoch & Bessette), Indigenous methodologies (Cushman, Powell, Tuhiwai Smith, Wilson), decolonial theories (García & Baca; Ruiz & Sánchez), feminist approaches (Enoch, Gaillet, Ramírez, Royster and Kirsch), antiracist efforts (Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia), queer and trans practices (Bessette, Rawson), disability studies (Brilmyer, Dolmage, McRuer, White), and other perspectives for reconsidering archival research.

Critical, communal, and digital archives often respond to a political moment, to social and cultural conditions, and to the needs of a community by reclaiming and/or retooling certain archival practices, sometimes rewriting archival conventions altogether. For example, marginalized communities and groups do not collect for the sake of collection. They often collect with the survival of their future generations in mind and to pass down their histories. This special issue invites contributions that shed light on how tactical archival practices can decenter, reshape, unsettle and rewrite traditional archival methodologies.

We invite scholars from across the disciplines, including the arts, humanities and social sciences, to submit a contribution in any of the following formats:

1. **full-length essays** (6,000 – 8,000 words) that unsettle archival research across the disciplines, including methodological interventions, theoretical approaches, praxis in critical, communal, and digital archival building, ethical explorations, community-engaged projects, critical reflections on affect and the consequences of archival research, and more.

2. **multimodal projects** that explore the affordances of a variety of digital media platforms for the purpose of critical, communal, and digital archiving, as well as projects that attend to the importance of materiality, ephemera, and the artifactual (Pahl & Rowsell; Wysocki & Sheridan).
3. **shorter essays** (2,500-3,000 words) that might interrogate a key term, offer a critical case study, examine a communal collection, recover a neglected site, repurpose a digital archive, or share a pedagogical application. We have designed the shorter essays to make it possible for graduate students, adjunct faculty, activists, emerging, contingent, underrepresented scholars, and other rebel voices to contribute to this special issue.

Contributors to this special issue may wish to consider the following questions:

- How might we unsettle institutional archives, given that place-based archives are often housed in institutions such as university and community libraries, historical societies, museums, medical schools, national monuments, national archives and special collections, and research centers? How might we re-envision common features such as curated materials, organized collections, finding aids, and procedures for handling materials to avoid re-inscribing colonial, racist, and sexist perspectives (Archivists Against History Repeating Itself)?
- How might we create, curate, and work with ephemeral archives, counter-archives, community-engaged and community-generated archives, archives-in-the-making, virtual or digital archives, rebel archives, impromptu archives? What are their affordances and limitations?
- What does it mean to collect and curate artifacts? Who decides what's worth collecting, and who is left out of the conversation? Is it possible to both collect and contextualize? How might we write histories of gaps, absences, and missing voices?
- What new tactics emerge in critical, communal, and digital archiving within and against systems of power? How do we reassess our digital archival practices, in particular, in light of recent concerns about access, digital privacy, surveillance, and data collection (Beck)?
- How can archives assist in delinking (García & Baca) and decolonial praxis projects (García)? Can archives undermine the logic of the colonial imaginary by helping us get to the locally situated practices that decoloniality calls for?
- How do archival professionals engage with troubling, haunting, and problematic collections? What are best practices and challenges today for unsettling archival research? How do archives and archivists approach issues of coloniality?
- How might we address the affective dimensions and emotional labor of archival research (Powell)? How might we honor "reciprocity, respect, and relational accountability" (Wilson), collaborate with the non-living, engage with the past, present, and future?
- How do we address questions of labor—the time, resources, space, and travel often required to engage in archival research? What are the consequences of such constraints for graduate students, adjunct faculty, activists, emerging, contingent, underrepresented scholars who may be particularly vulnerable and underfunded?

All references in this CFP are available upon request.

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Editorial Feedback: October 1, 2020

Final Manuscripts Due: January 1, 2021

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Proposal Format: Please submit a 500-word proposal explaining your topic, the research and theoretical base on which you will draw, and your plans for the structure of your article, following the general guidelines for *ATD* at <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/submissions.cfm>. Send your proposal electronically (in MS Word format) to Gesa Kirsch at gesa.kirsch@gmail.com and also to *ATD* editor Michael Cripps at mcripps@une.edu. Please provide full contact information with your submission.