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Kim Louise Walden

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404: FILE NOT FOUND WEB ARCHIVES AND THE CHALLENGES OF PRESERVING DIGITAL FILM PROMOTION

Kim Louise Walden

This article builds upon the invitation at the end of a previous contribution to the Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television by Keith Johnston to take up the methodological challenges relating to the study of historical promotional materials. The article focuses on a form of promotion that has emerged with the advent of the Internet – the film website. It starts with an examination of the archival record online. It considers the development of web archiving and the nature of the archive as it transforms from the physical to the digital. In the light of this history a selection of film promotion repositories is examined: the largest online archive in the world- the Internet Archive; a German museum initiative - DigitalCraft.Org; new kinds of archives like the Webby Awards and an enthusiast's blog – Movie Marketing Madness. Through an investigation of these online archives, the contours of this promotional form emerge and the mapping of its historical development can commerce.

In 2019, the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* published an article by Keith Johnston titled 'Researching Historical Promotional Materials: Towards a New Methodology' that focussed on industrial film promotion such as posters and trailers before 1980. In this article Johnston reflects on this kind and argues that historical promotional materials are not just adjuncts to film, they are worthy of study in their own right, but remain under researched. One of the aims of the article is to start a debate about researching the field and methods to develop such studies. This article responds to that invitation by considering the challenges of researching historical online film promotion that have emerged since the advent of

Correspondence to: Kim Louise Walden, School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AB, UK. Email: K.Walden2@Herts.ac.uk

the internet and its role in cultivating audiences. The article aims to contribute to this debate as it examines the history of web archiving, considers the nature of digital archives, assesses the challenges of researching historical online film promotion, and issues related to the preservation of online film marketing. By so doing the article aims to draw attention to a feature of contemporary film marketing and promotion that has not attracted a great deal of attention until now.

This article begins by introducing the field of online film promotion, and its specific interest in film promotion websites. An indicative example illustrates how these digital-born artefacts provide rich story expansions to their films, which are sometimes as entertaining as the films themselves, and certainly form part of the twenty-first century film experience. Yet they remain unacknowledged and unrecognised as artefacts in their own right, and as a consequence are rendered ephemeral. Here parallels are evident with Johnston's research into pre-1980 film promotion, and the perils faced by all promotional artefacts whether analogue or digital are clearly significant. Because if an artefact is not critically appraised, it is not regarded as worthy of preservation, and to reiterate film historian William Urrichio's assertion, when an object of study is not an archival priority it runs the risk of not being available to future historians[1].

So, this article considers the following questions: Where are film websites collected, recorded, or archived? And what these archives can tell us about the development of online film marketing? To begin to address these questions, the article outlines the development of web archiving to provide a historical context to this investigation. Then it reviews what has been written about archiving and preservation and distils this literature into a set of conceptual and technical principles by which to consider the digital archives. In the light of this, four archives are selected for closer examination that represent the phases of development of distinct kinds of online repositories.[2] They are the Internet Archive; *DigitalCraft.Org*; *The Webby Awards*; and the *Movie Marketing Madness* blog. The archives' contents are examined for what they can tell us about the development of film websites, as well as digital. The article then reflects on the nature of online archives, specifically how digital archives are both similar to, and different from traditional analogue archives; and how these characteristics impact on the object archived. The article concludes that digital film promotion is an instance of the 'vanishing present' in what has been termed 'the digital dark age' but suggests that this comparative approach to archive research can yield insight into the development of film websites as a form of online film promotion.[3]

Online film promotion

Film promotion has expanded significantly over the last 30 years both on and offline. What Finola Kerrigan refers to as 'traditional' film marketing materials such as posters, trailers, press/campaign books and lobby cards, have been joined by VR (Virtual Reality), AR (Augmented Reality), Alterative Reality Games (ARG) and 'live' events at comic cons.[4] Film promotion has expanded onto social media platforms and film websites have become online hubs for promotion campaigns as the location for trailer releases, curated media coverage as well as 'making of' features in recent decades. But the websites of particular interest here are not just deployed for promotional

purposes but contribute to the storytelling process too. More precisely, as Thomas Austin describes promotional forms that do not just extract material from film they promote, as trailers conventionally do, but promotional forms that contribute to the film's narrative and the wider filmic experience and have developed their own narrative techniques, aesthetics, and forms of audience engagement.[5]

To illustrate, *The Grand Budapest Hotel: Akademie Zubrowka* site was designed by the digital marketing agency WatsonDG in collaboration with the director Wes Anderson to promote his film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) and was the recipient of the 2015 *Webby* award for best website in the movie and film category. The site is wonderfully inventive. Designed as an in-world companion to the film, it depicts the fictional alpine Republic of Zubrowka at the start of the twentieth century, complete with a World War One-style syllabus of lessons about the history and culture of this make-believe country. Moreover, in keeping with its historical period, the site is viewed via a simulated microfilm viewer, lens loader and navigational wheel to move through the 'slides.'

However, a survey of critical commentary in the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) database shows that writings on Anderson's work cover every aspect of the film's production, but there is little consideration given to the website at all. On the website Anderson has developed a story world for the plot, providing additional narrative detail that could not be incorporated into the film, yet this component of the film remains unacknowledged. It seems that while film websites like this are designed in conjunction with films and other transmedia components of a production, they are rarely appraised for their contribution to the contemporary film viewing experience.

The pragmatic explanation for this is simple. Paratextual promotional materials have a short shelf life. Once a film has journeyed through its release windows in the cinema, DVD and Blu-ray formats, video-on-demand and television, their job is done, they are effectively redundant, and their fate becomes precarious. Independent film makers may leave sites online to provide the film with an ongoing presence but studios more often' lock' discussion boards so that no further contributions can be made. Websites are taken down and disappear from the public domain as studio marketing divisions seek to refocus attention on forthcoming releases. In sum, film websites are ephemeral, and their ephemerality jeopardises the possibility of critical appraisal. Since the mid-1990s, the first generations of film websites have effectively disappeared and as a result their role remains largely unrecognised, their development uncharted and their history untold. So, this article seeks to examine the development of this new form of promotion since the advent of the general web in 1994. However, before the article embarks on its historical enquiry, it would be useful to consider the nature of digital archives and how they differ from their analogue counterparts.

Digital archives

A report compiled by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) defines digital archives as collections of born-digital artefacts of interest.[6] Archives may take the form of collections representing material of interest to the nation; an entire

domain collection; a collection based on a specialist subject; or a record of a management system for commercial or legal purposes.[7] Collections may be created manually, or with automation tools, and be stored either on or offline.[8] But an archive should be accessible and have an interface that allows users to see objects in the archive.[9] Although the history of the development of web archives is short and doesn't even amount to three decades, two distinct approaches have emerged to chart this history. The first can be found in an article titled 'Unpacking Archival Silences' (2013) by Anat Ben-David. She identifies four main phases of development and recognises evolving technologies as key driver of change for web archiving practices. Whilst the second approach derives from a chapter titled 'Periodizing Web Archiving: Biographical, Event-Based, National and Autobiographical Traditions' by Richard Rogers in *The Sage Handbook of Web History* (2019). He argues that the development of web archiving practices generates distinctive historiographical perspectives[10]. He goes on to suggest that these perspectives are hard-wired into different web archiving practices and therefore, he argues different web archiving traditions afford particular approaches to understanding the history of web archiving[11]. For the purposes of this research, what is interesting about these histories is, on the one hand their accord about the periodization of this development, whilst on the other hand how their perspectives yield quite different insights into emerging practices.

According to Rogers, the earliest web archives were link lists or 'directories,' which took the form of lengthy lists of website URL addresses.[12] In the text-based world of the early web, indexes were compiled by internet portals like Yahoo.com and AOL (America Online) with the Open Directory Project.[13] Requests for inclusion in these directories were decided by editors who curated sites into categories for lists, hyperlinked to the sites.[14] The Open Directory Project was maintained by a community of volunteer editors who sifted and sorted sites and maintained their directory, ensuring that hyperlinks were operative.[15] In this way portals like Yahoo and AOL's Directory Project pioneered online archive practices with their systems of classification as well as navigation. Moreover, these link lists differed from library-based classification systems because unlike a book in a library, at Yahoo.com a website could be located in more than one category and be viewed by multiple people at the same time.[16]

From 1996 to 2000 the first generation of web archives were regarded as extensions of libraries, both in terms of ethos and in practice, with an emphasis on collection, preservation and cataloguing of websites. The key exponent of this approach is the Internet Archive whose founder, Brewster Kahle, refers to the archive as a 'digital library' and with its aptly named search engine technology, Alexa, inviting parallels with the mythical library of Alexandria in ancient Egypt.[17] To address the '404 File not found' problem (a term used by computer systems to indicate that the page requested cannot be located), one of the strategies for collection used by the archive was an early form of crowd sourcing.[18] Alexa Internet made a browser tool available which took the form of a small button named 'Wayback' that would pulsate if the website visited had not been found and, where possible, would supply the missing page from the Internet Archive.[19] In exchange for this 'service', the user would agree to allow their internet search history to be

logged so crawlers could visit and archive logged sites.[20] Originally, the Internet Archive's search facility, the Wayback Machine was designed to enable searching by a site's URL (Universal Resource Locator). But since 2016 it has become possible to search using key words that appear in the URL or metatext.[21] Rogers observes how the Internet Archive's approach, in effect, organises the history of the web into standalone single site histories.[22] Search returns are delivered in a calendar and timeline format which enables the searcher to see all the dates the site was crawled and archived, as well as the frequency of the crawls. This form of organisation lends itself to what he terms a biographical tradition as one of the affordances of the Internet Archive is that the 'lifespan' of a single site can be tracked in this format.[23]

Once tools for the retrieval of web content became available from around 2000 onwards, collections were created for specific research projects.[24] Social Science researchers began using the web as an archival resource for studying social and political phenomena.[25] The historiographical tradition this approach yielded tended to be focused on specific events from presidential elections to papal transitions as well as natural disasters.[26] Collections of web pages focussed around events provided the materials for studies such as Christine Hine's 'virtual' ethnography of the Louise Woodward alleged child abuse case.[27] But the best-known archive research based on a collection was undertaken by Kirsten Foot, Barbara Warnick and Steven Schneider tracing online articulations of bereavement following the 9/11 attacks in New York in 2001.[28] The researchers collected 25,000 sites over a period of four months in relation to the 9/11 attack.[29] The collection concept in operation in this period has become known as 'web spheres'.[30] The principle being that a collection of web sites could be defined topologically as well as temporally around an event which the authors defined as 'a set of dynamically defined digital resources, often connected by hyperlinks, spanning multiple websites, relevant to a central event, concept or theme and bounded temporally.'[31] Rogers points out that what is innovative about this approach is that it is medium-specific and capitalises on the nature of the web with its dynamic collection approach which discovers new websites through hyperlink analysis.[32]

Initiatives to create national level web archives began with Kulturarw3 web archive in Sweden and the Pandora and Tasmanian archive in Australia as early as 1996, shortly after the advent of the general web.[33] Over the next decade what Ben-David terms the 'national turn' in the development of web archiving emerges and other national level organisations followed suit developing infrastructure for collection, preservation and to a lesser extent, access.[34] In surveys of web archiving across the globe, it has been estimated that most of the archives surveyed hold content exclusively related to their host country, region or institution[35]. Although archives such as the Internet Archive and the Internet Memory Foundation seek to preserve web content from all over the world too.[36]

This historiographical tradition then, is a national perspective, whereby the web is conceptualised in terms of geographical nations, and national institutions extend their existing remit to keep public records and national heritage to the internet. The US Library of Congress began archiving what it termed 'born-digital web content' in 2000.[37] This included sites deemed to be of national significance,

social media pages and national events.[38] In this regard the aim of these collections is to create an official national history and by this definition, as Rogers observes, the web becomes a 'national story'.[39]

To support these initiatives, national digital cultural heritage policies were established, accompanied by legal frameworks to put them into operation. In 2004 the British Library developed a policy to 'collect, make accessible and preserve web resources of scholarly and cultural importance from the UK domain and began the collection the following year.[40] This policy was underpinned by legislation that enables the library to acquire a copy of any digital resource published in the UK, including not only websites, but social media, and to make that copy available to the public at designated UK deposit libraries.[41,42]

Digital legal deposit legislation was designed to enable the creation of a comprehensive collection, an authoritative bibliographic record and ease of access with the aim of archiving the entire UK web domain.[43] In the period between 1996-2012 the focus of national web archive initiatives was on building the infrastructure for the preservation of web archives. To date more than 19,000 websites have permission from their owners so they can be viewed from anywhere in the United Kingdom via the UK Web Archive website.[44] However, the vast majority of sites collected under the legislation, whose numbers run into the millions, can only be accessed via building-based reading rooms in the deposit libraries.[45] The reason for this anachronism of a global network only viewable in a physical space, is the constraints of copyright law.[46]

From 1997 onwards, one of the most popular forms of research across the disciplines is the use of web data collections for longitudinal studies, drawing either on data extracted from existing institutional archives like the Internet Archive, or bespoke archives. Ben-David terms this form of web archive 'temporal web collections' because they are generated by periodic sampling over time to facilitate a diachronic perspective.[47] But the main reason for custom built archives either by researchers or specific interest groups is that such archives often focus on interests that fall outside the traditional selection criteria for national institutional web archives.

The most recent kind of web archive to emerge has been described as the paradigm shift resulting from the advent of web 2.0 technologies and the emergence of social media platforms and applications.[48] Conventional conceptions of the archive were transformed with the advent of web 2.0. The potential to archive has passed from institutions to individuals which Rogers characterises as an 'autobiographical' period of archiving.[49] The traditional model of the archivist as an 'agent' undertaking the selection of artefacts for preservation, collection and the cultural record, contrasts with the new archival practices of today by individuals afforded by storage capacity and digital communication technologies. In short, this fourth phase of development brings with it the capacity to archive oneself, particularly since social media are outside the purview of many previous web archiving strategies.

From 2003, self-archiving practices often took the form of personal diaries like blogging but have evolved since then to include Facebook pages, LinkedIn, phone applications (apps), Twitter hashtags and so forth. Social media platforms have not, however, evolved uniform approaches to the question of their preservation.[50] For example, social media like Facebook and LinkedIn regard themselves as social

media networks rather than content sites, so they do not permit the crawlers deployed by the Internet Archive.[51] While user generated sites like YouTube and Pinterest allow archiving of their material and Twitter actively encourages its archivisation by donating historical tweets to the Library of Congress for storage.[52] As a result, it has been argued that the practice of archiving has been fundamentally redefined from 'the practice of a social agent' to a 'social practice'.[53] Anyone with access to the web can be an archivist in the age of social media and it is these developments in archival technologies that will shape what we can know in the future. So, what are the implications of the development of web archiving for a historical understanding of online film promotion? To address this question, this article considers how archives and archivisation have been conceptualised to discover what insight the literature may provide.

Michel Foucault asserts that our understanding of the past is shaped by the 'present state of knowledge'.[54] He uses the term 'archive', not to describe a physical repository of historical artefacts, but to explain what is known about a subject, which he refers to as a 'system of discursivity' with all its accompanying enunciative possibilities and prohibitions.[55] For Foucault, then an archive is the first 'law of what can be said' on a specific subject.[56] To exemplify, he points to the way knowledge is organised according to subject disciplines, and how their methodologies determine what lies within and what lies outside the concerns of the discipline.[57] In view of this, it is interesting to reflect on the academic status of film websites that are regarded as commercial materials of little intrinsic value and, for the most part, located outside film studies' definition of what is worthy of scholarly attention.[58] As a result over the last two decades film websites have, by and large, been overlooked and there has been little critical evaluation of what they contribute to the film experience. So, the current state of knowledge in film scholarship plays a significant role in determining what the future can know about the subject and raises wider questions about how historical knowledge is constituted.

The relationship between the past, present and future is of interest to Jacques Derrida too. While Derrida's work was published in 1995, right at the beginning of the period under consideration in this article, at the time when the internet entered the public domain, so he refers to physical archives. However, he does recognise that the technologies of the archive play a role in determining what can be known about an artefact.[59] In *Archive Fever* (1995) he suggests that, while archives may be concerned with the preservation of the past in the immediate sense, in effect, they constitute an 'open letter' to the future.[60] In this respect he is in accord with Foucault that whatever is archived in the present conditions what is remembered in the future. He writes: 'the question of the archive is not … a question of the past. … It is a question of the future … the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.' [61] So, by this definition, archival preservation of film websites is a critical precursor to any form of evaluation of the artefact itself.

Derrida traces the term 'archive' back to its Greek antecedent, the *arkhe*, and the *archon* who is granted authority to be an archivist.[62] He identifies the three main principles that define archival practices as *commandment, consignment*, and *commencement*.[63] To briefly explain, *commandment* is the point at which the archive maker is recognised

for this undertaking, and receives authorisation to undertake the task.[64] This means the archival process is socially sanctioned, culturally validated and, by implication, whatever resides in this archive is confirmed as a legitimate representation of the past.[65] The process of *consignment* takes place when decisions about what will be selected for preservation in the archive are made, along with decisions about the processes of identification, collection, ordering and classification of artefacts.[66] The third process of *commencement* recognises that one of the basic motivations of the archive is to establish the authority of provenance.[67] That is to say, archival authority is predicated on its knowledge of the biography of an artefact from its point of its origin to the time when it is included in the archive.[68]

Derrida is interested in how the processes of archivisation impact on the artefact being archived.[69] For example, at the most basic level, the archival process transfers an artefact into a new (physical) space and assigns it a different identity and value from its original function. So, archives have the effect of 'establishing' the value of the artefact, as well as its value as a 'historical truth.'[70] Derrida concludes that this has consequences for what we know about the past and observes 'archivisation produces as much as it records.'[71]

Digitisation has brought with it a renewed interest for scholars in the material conditions under which media operate. Friedrich Kittler pointedly describes media as 'machines' rather than 'texts' to underscore this.[72] He asserts that as a result of digitisation, media characteristics have, in effect become 'surface effects' providing an interface for human interaction, but the real meaning of digital media is its facility for storage.[73] Kittler shares Foucault's interest in excavating the conditions in which knowledge arises,[74] and concludes that media 'produce what it allegedly only reproduces' suggesting any examination of archives must scrutinise not only its artefacts, but also technology, design and architecture. In sum, what its materiality can tell us about the past.[75]

While digital media are not always experienced explicitly as such, Lev Manovich maintains that storage capacity is its essential attribute.[76] In *The Language of New Media*, he explains how, in essence, all digital media are first and foremost a collection of data files and are therefore best understood as databases.[77] He notes that it was in the mid-1990s when the storage facility of the 'universal media machine' became available, that the drive to archive began.[78] He observes a 'growing number of organisations are embarking on ambitious projects. Everything is being collected: cultural asteroids, DNA patterns, credit records, telephone conversations, it does not matter.'[79] Indeed, Manovich hypothesises that data indexing will become a cultural pastime, or even profession in the future.[80]

Two decades later, this observation has been borne out, as can be seen with the proliferation of platforms with archival architectures on the internet such as Flickr (2004), Facebook (2004), Tumblr (2007) and Instagram (2010). The inference of these developments is the de-institutionalisation of the archive. Now an archive can be created independently, rather than formally 'commenced,' in the Derridean sense of the word, and *archonic* power assumed, even though its value may be individual, as well as, or rather than, culturally or institutionally recognised. In turn, this challenges assumptions about which cultural forms should be

regarded as culturally significant that again has bearing on ephemeral forms like digital film promotion.

The nature of archives

In summary then, these writings indicate that archives are characterised by three fundamental processes: storage, system, and selection. Besides the physical storage of the data/artefacts collected and preserved for the record, all archives, whether digital or analogue are driven by intention or rationale, and therefore archival collection processes are inherently systematic. Following on from this, archival collections are always selective because they are based on a set of beliefs about what will be (and, implicitly, what will not be) important in the future. Furthermore, while collections are subject to boundary restrictions, selection infers curation and value conferred upon the object through this process as well as the creation of a place in which to situate the collection.

As an archive fulfils these processes of storage, systematic collection and selection, the principles and purposes that define the nature of the archive and determine its usage become apparent. Moreover, these principles and purposes do not just operate on the practical level of organisation, as implicitly archiving is also a historiographical process – the process of writing history through the production of an archive. So, just as a library is not just a collection of books but a system by which books can be found, archives are defined by their systems and their processes and procedures, as much as their contents, and these processes are part of the meaning of an archive.[81]

Archival principles and purposes are always based on a view of the world, and a conception of their future uses and values, and in this way, they are discursive in the Foucauldian sense. In the creation of archives, there is always going to be an evaluation of the balance between effort and worth. In the past, few archives have been interested in film promotional ephemera because ephemera were not regarded as having any value. Furthermore, ephemerality within a film culture is complicated by transmedia productions that blur distinctions between promotion and content. While some components of a production remain available, others, like promotional websites may disappear because transmedia paratexts have not been regarded as worth preserving. Thus, rendering the archives of transmedia production only partially available for future scholarship.

If all digital files are understood as forms of archive, it may be useful to make a further distinction about intention and how archives are created- between deliberate and inadvertent collections. A deliberate collection seeks to collect a specific artefact, and selection criteria determine what is collected. An inadvertent collection system on the other hand may have a broad remit to collect material, or where another activity coincidentally creates an archive-type collection, or even has no remit and may inadvertently collect the artefact under consideration. And finally, deliberate collections may be subdivided into two further categories: the universal and the particular: universal in the sense that all published sites are collected, and particular, in the sense that selection is determined by the criteria for collection. Having established some principles and parameters of archivisation,

these features can form a framework to appraise and evaluate the archives selected for closer consideration.

Case studies

In order to get a sense of the kind of archival settings where film promotional websites have been archived online, the project adopted the historical mapping of web archives described in the Digital Archives section as a framework for the next stage of the project and selected one archive from each of the four historical periods to enable a cross section of archival practice in this field to be examined. The first case study is an index archive and is the best known to date - the Internet Archive established in 1996. The second case study is a digital cultural heritage policy-led initiative by the Museum of Applied Art in Frankfurt in Germany to create a collection of digital-born artefacts known as *DigitalCraft.org*.[82] The third case study is the *Webby Awards* that have been celebrating digital creativity and specifically for my purposes, film websites since 1997.[83] And the fourth case study is a web 2.0-enabled archive - *Movie Marketing Madness* - a blog created by an individual enthusiast, Chris Thilk in 2003. Having identified a cross-section of distinct kinds of archives, the next task is to evaluate their processes, practices, and approaches to archivisation against the principles identified in the writings of selected archive theorists.

Case study 1: web index archives – internet archive

Established as a non-profit organisation by the computer scientist and internet entrepreneur Brewster Kahle, the Internet Archive is widely regarded as the most complete archive of the internet to this day. It was set up to preserve historical collections in digital formats, but its largest collection is its web archive that currently numbers 681 billion web pages.[84] The archive is compiled by automated domain archiving, using software tools that periodically download publicly accessible websites, and present 'snapshots' of these sites as an archival record.[85] So, in this sense the Internet Archive is not selective, but it is systematic.

However, in Kittlerian terms, a collection of materials only becomes a true archive when it is searchable by its users and data can be retrieved but the archive's search engine, known as the Wayback Machine was not developed until 2001.[86] Unlike Google's text-based search facility, the Wayback Machine search engine searched by web address as indicated by the 'http' prompt in its search box.[87] Without knowing the URL address for a website, searching can be challenging and limited index information indicates that the archive is set up primarily for collection, and access was clearly an after-thought. Since 2016. this search facility has become more user-friendly and now it is possible to search using key words from the URL or metatext. But from the perspective of this article's concerns, the Internet Archive is an inadvertent archive, rather than a deliberate archive of film promotion.

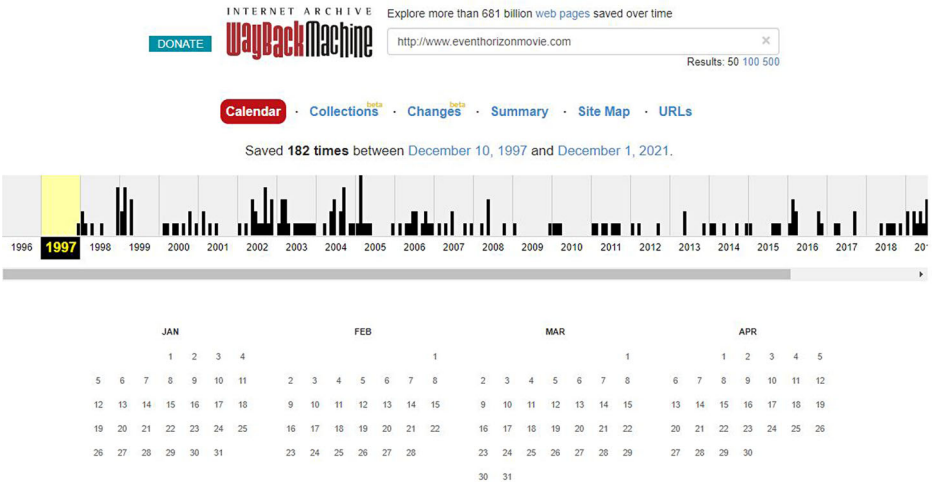

Figure 1. *Wayback Machine* search returns delivered in calendar format. © *Internet Archive*, (2022).

Since 2010 Wayback Machine's search returns have been presented in the form of a calendar.[88] (See Figure 1) Along the top of the screen, there is a bar chart spanning from 1996 to the present day, and the 'snapshots' taken by the Internet Archive during that year are identified in the bar chart. Moving the cursor over a specific year, brings up a year's calendar with the days illuminated by small blue circles indicating when the site was recorded. Moving the cursor over a blue circle brings up a record of how many times the site was captured on the day. An exploratory search for the film *Event Horizon*'s (Paul Anderson, 1997) promotional website via the Wayback Machine yielded an interesting example of an early site. (See Figure 2)

The site's landing page advises visitors about its free to use plug-in software for different computer operating systems. But the site's intended audience is not clear. From one perspective the site is addressing the press with electronic press kit (EPK)-style information including pages of production notes and a full set of credits. While from another perspective the site addresses its prospective audience inviting them to enter the film's in-movie storyworld for a 'mission briefing' and visitors are instructed to get their helmets on and 'be ready for anything!' Together with an extended essay on the scientific phenomenon of black holes in space. These different registers address both the press and public audiences at the same time and the preservation of sites like this offers the possibility of encountering early design formats for in-movie worlds, first-hand as well as emerging web social protocols. Clicking on the site's 'cockpit' link however brings the whole experience to an abrupt halt because it does not work. The hyperlink is broken as the page content (assets) has been moved or deleted. When the link destination changes or is deleted, the connection between one page of a website and another ceases to exist, or defaults to the current site creating a link between the past and the present that internet historian, Richard Rogers describes as creating 'jump cuts' through time.[89] In other words, the archives privileges spatial navigation over temporal navigation and the effect on archived websites is that they become connected to versions of themselves across time creating what Rogers describes as a

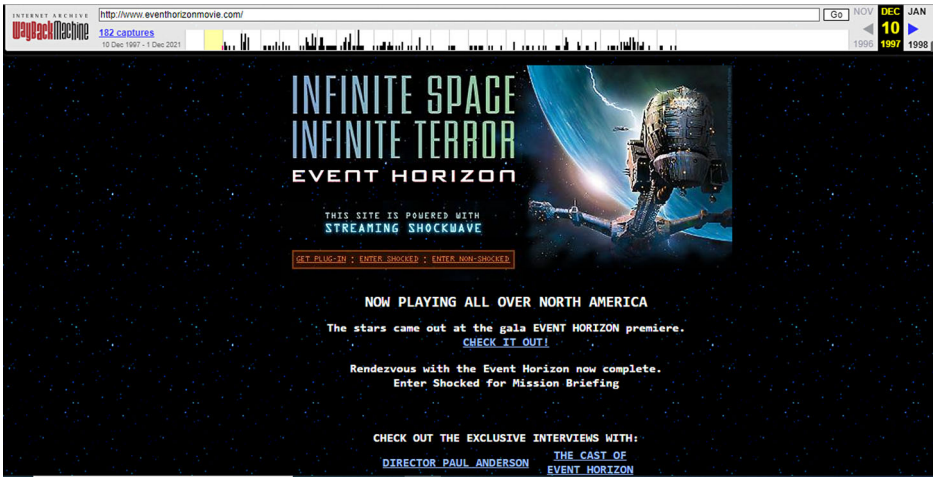

Figure 2. Eventhorizon.com © Golar Productions, 2022.

'multi-temporal archival experience' but the upshot is that the site becomes a jumble of bits and pieces[90] Following this initial exploration, I repeated the search for several other film sites from the same year including *Men in Black* (1997), *Titanic* (1997) and *Alien: Resurrection* (1997), and the problem is evident in them all. The Wayback Machine had archived the core site but was unable to archive all its assets. So, while they have not disappeared, these sites hardly constitute a complete or even stable object for the researcher. So, this exercise brings into question the conventional understanding of an archived document in the online context.

While Kahle's ambition is for the Internet Archive to become a 'universal' collection, in practice it is an enormous collection of fragments.[91] The archive has storage capacity, but the nature of the object it seeks to preserve eludes complete collection and preservation. This is because the conception of websites as standalone entities is not accurate as they are made up of material from elsewhere, illustrating Kittler's point that the materiality of technology needs to be understood to comprehend its limitations as an archival setting.[92] However, Rogers advises that if the researcher follows the Internet Archive's modus operandi, despite its limitations, it can be an insightful tool and retain 'archonic' authority.[93] Additionally the Internet Archive has recently developed a number of data analysis tools which identify the different kinds of image files, text and applications that make up a site. So, for example the 1998 site for *Alien: Resurrection* consisted of around 75% text, 25% graphics, whereas the next *Alien* film in 2012, *Prometheus* contained just over 30% text with far greater percentage of graphic content illustrating how film site design has evolved during the lifetime of the franchise. But the main outcome produced by this archive is a mode of historiographical information charting the lifecycle of the website over time. In sum the Internet Archive and the Wayback Machine have organised the history of the web into a collection of website biographies.[94] By so doing demonstrates how the Internet Archive illustrates Derrida's third archival process of *commencement* that establishes the provenance of the artefact by charting its lifespan.[95]

Case study 2: digital cultural heritage policy – digitalcraft.org

From the mid-1990s, national libraries and museums began developing digital cultural heritage policies.[96] The Museum für Angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Art) in Frankfurt, Germany whose remit is to conserve and preserve applied arts and craft was concerned that despite the impact that digital technology was having on all sectors of society, there had been little recognition of this form of media production as a craft.[97] As a result, *DigitalCraft.org* was established in 1999 to develop a collection of online communities, games, emulators and websites for the museum.[98]

This archival initiative set out to tackle the numerous technical challenges such as platform obsolescence and software updates and project's director, Franziska Nori decided that the only way to create a permanent collection of web design and ensure full functionality was to make offline versions of the digital artefacts.[99] The project had to take into consideration a number of archival challenges, not least of which was questions of legality. Domain owner permissions and copyright holder clearance was sought as copyright law was not designed for digital artefacts.[100] An exhibition of web-based artefacts could be licensed for display in the museum, but not on the web, because copyright concerns not only the artefact, but the commissioning partner, as well as the designer. Moreover, some websites incorporated add-ons which were licensed separately.[101] Even housing the collection online turned out to be prohibited, as web publication was too broad to be covered by a licence agreement and so, ironically, like counterparts at the British Library and Cambridge University Library, this collection of web-based artefacts was confined to a building-based exhibition in the Frankfurt museum.[102] A situation that is inherently contradictory, when in the post-geographical context of the internet, archived web material is only accessible 'on site' in a fixed location.

Unlike the Internet Archive's automated collection, for *DigitalCraft.org*, the question of what to include in the collection was deliberate.[103] Although film websites were not the sole focus of the collection, within the database there were eight notable film websites including sites for Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* site (2000) and Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000).[104] Based on the host institution's conception of design craft, the selection criteria included the originality and uniqueness of concept; the quality of visual representation; usability; content and context; technical innovation and inventiveness in navigation. Together these criteria illustrate Derrida's concept of 'consignment' where decisions about what is selected for preservation are taken according to specific initiatives and the nominated institution's agenda.[105]

The wider challenge was to ensure an archiving system that accorded with international museum description standards advised by the International Council of Museums (CIMI), Dublin Core and the Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO).[106] To do this the team developed inventory descriptions recognising the features of digital artefacts including programming languages, and plug-in software.[107] Lastly catalogue information outlined what was distinctive about each artefact as web design illustrating how the museum's curatorial processes infer appraisal and confer value upon the object.[108]

The complete archive consisted of two collections: a building-based collection of 50 websites housed on the project's servers and an online database of one hundred websites from different fields.[109] Catalogued entries included provenantial information about the site's designer, copyright holder, country of origin, date of entry into the collection, programming language, as well as notes of plug-ins to view the site's full operation and a link to the live web version.[110] The catalogue also provided a description of the 'experience' of the site and outlined how the site operated in relation to the film.[111] In this way, the collection fulfilled the first of Derrida's archival processes - *consignment* when selection and systems for storage were created, together with processes of identification, ordering and classification.[112]

However, while the *Digitcraft.org* archive set out to address the challenge of preserving digital artefacts, the initiative had its limitations. To be stored in the collection, sites had to be stripped of components deemed unsuitable for server storage such as databases, competitions, and chat functions.[113] An approach indicative of the project's pre-web 2.0 mindset which regarded websites as stand-alone objects. The artefacts were further compromised by the fact that sites were archived without other components of the promotional campaign like trailers, posters, and TV spots, or indeed the film they were designed to promote. By archiving sites like this, the artefact's meaning and value is pared down to that conceived by the institutional agenda which in this instance regards film websites as digital craft, disregarding the artefacts role as film promotion or expanded forms of storytelling. But this does illustrate Kittler's assertion that storage media are not just physical repositories but discursive artefacts too, and points to the way all archives play a role in determining what we know.[114]

Just three years after this pioneering project began, a new incoming Museum Director reversed the policy decision to maintain this collection, closed the department and dismantled the building-based collection.[115] Now all that remains is the online catalogue hosted by the City of Frankfurt's server to maintain public access and whilst the project's Director still maintains a *Digitalcraft.org* email address, this case study illustrates that archives can be ephemeral too.[116]To all intents and purposes, when funding was withdrawn and the museum severed its ties with the collection, this archive lost its 'archonic' authority and could be regarded as a failure. However, for the purposes of this article's examination of the archivisation of digital artefacts, there is much to glean from this case study. What was clear was that the process of archival selection was based on 'archonic' assumptions about what will be important in the future and the truth is that it is always in contention. So, consequently the archival process was shaped by institutional agendas and politics that determine what people in the future may know about the past.

Case study 3: temporal web collections - Webby awards

The next case study is what Ben-David terms a 'temporal web collection' – that is to say either a bespoke collection or archive generated from existing resources, by periodic sampling over time.[117] Web design awards have proliferated over the last

twenty years and these awards often hold a 'hall of fame' commemorating award winners and while this is not their primary function, these archives are an inadvertent consequence of a deliberate process. Moreover, some of these awards have systemically created a record of their winners which may provide the basis of a longitudinal perspective on the development of film websites.[118]

A survey of web design awards revealed that the *Webby* Awards, established in 1996, are the longest running awards of their kind. [119] Hosted by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS) the *Webby* Awards are modelled on the academy awards for film and seeks to honour 'the best of the internet.' A by-product of this annual contest is its Archive and Gallery, which is, in fact, a searchable database of award winners spanning more than twenty-five years to date, earning its self-declared recognition as 'a capsule of internet history.'[120] While the *Webby* Awards is an inadvertent archive, its processes of appraisal and judgements by expert panels and popular votes are both selective and systematically judged. Moreover, by adopting the term 'archive' the *Webby* Awards has become a self-appointed custodian of web design history and the collection assumes the Derridean authority of a record.[121]

The *Webby* Awards' category for 'movie and film' covers 'sites dedicated to promotion, celebration and presentation of films, movies and film culture.' From 1996 to 2004, film website winners and nominees were known only by the title of the film they promoted, rather than as cultural artefacts in their own right. However, by 2005 there was a shift in the mode of address, and websites begin to be attributed to design agencies (albeit in small print with no hyperlinks) and explanatory notes on the design process became an additional feature of the listing. In 2012 credits were given to designers in the winners and nominees lists and by 2017, many agencies were archiving their own work and the *Webbys* link to agency sites where their web design is showcased with extended commentary.

A developmental arc of this new form of promotion is discernible in the *Webbys* winners' archive. Over the period film websites transform from post-release sites for Richard Kelly's *Donnie Darko* (2001), and Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* (2002), to fully integrated transmedia events such as the sites for *The Hunger Games* (2012-15), or *The Grand Budapest Hotel*'s *Akademie Zubrowka* in 2015 which can be operational for years before and after a film's release. Conventions begin to emerge such as the franchise 'universe' in *Jurassic World.com* and *StarWars.com* (*Webby* winner in 2017 and 2018); Another convention to emerge is web-based counter narratives (in which the film's narratives are told from different perspectives) for character-driven films such as *The Simpsons* (2007), and *District 9* (2009); While website 'experiences' provide a foretaste of the film such as *Sully: The 208 Seconds Experience* or *Independence Day: My Street* where visitors type in a street address and watch how the site uses Google Street view imagery to generate fake news footage of an alien bombing attack of the location. What is evident, even from this snapshot of sites, is that websites have become an integral component of the film narrative as well as the contemporary film experience.

The *Webbys* Archive and Gallery claims, 'if you want to see the past, look in here', but there are some notable gaps and absences.[122] According to *Variety*, in 1999 *The Blair Witch Project* site made such an impact on film audiences that it

prompted a shift in industry attitudes towards the internet as a site for film promotion, yet the site is conspicuously absent from the *Webbys* archive.[123] Similarly, *The Beast* was significant as it was widely regarded as the first ARG (Alternative Reality Game) designed to promote Steven Spielberg's *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (2001), yet it does not figure in the *Webbys* 'Hall of Fame' either.[124] Such archival absences remind us that, contrary to its claim, like the Internet Archive, visitors to the *Webbys* archive cannot 'see the past' here after all, or, to put it another way, can only see one version of the past.[125]

In 2005 when ownership of the *Webbys* changed hands, the number of its award categories grew exponentially, along with entry fee charges and the Awards have been widely criticised for excluding 'worthy candidates' and leave the field dominated by well-resourced film studio marketing divisions.[126] Now whilst this has clearly become the case, nevertheless, close reading of these awards can still yield insight into how awards shape the development of film websites. Awards proclaim their winners as models of excellence for adoption or adaptation. Webby Award winners, nominees and honourees consecrate certain ways of doing things and as a result models of design are copied and become conventions. Foucault asserts that 'monuments' (like awards) are discursive entities that tell us as much about the factors that gave rise to their appearance, as the past.[127] So, in the absence of other critical discourse such as journalism or academic commentary, these awards function as discursive practices. As a result, awards may not only validate existing film website designs, but shape the future forms film websites will take.

Case study 4: web 2.0 archives –movie marketing madness blog

The final case study represents a paradigm change in online archiving practices resulting from web 2.0 that gave rise to applications like the blog.[128] A 'blog', a term created through a conflation of web and log, enables individuals to compose and share a log of content and while structures vary, a blog's central component is the 'post' - that is a piece of written commentary, image or video linked to other sources of information. Blogs store collections of writings in reverse chronological order, with the most recent posts published at the top of the home page and by scrolling down the reader can delve into past posts in the blog's archives.[129] Structurally speaking, the blog's archive is an index to past posts, organised by date, category and lists of links similar to the first web archives.[130]

The *Movie Marketing Madness* blog illustrates the importance of human actors in digital archiving initiatives. Freelance writer and content strategist, Chris Thilk began blogging in 2003 as a past-time, becoming what has been described as a 'techno-volunteer'.[131] Initially, Thilk had no set approach to writing about film promotional campaigns, but by the end of the year he had developed a clear editorial policy.[132] His modus operandi was to focus predominantly on Hollywood campaigns, and he would appraise all its components - trailers, posters, online and social advertising, cross-promotions, media and publicity.[133] In time *Movie Marketing Madness* garnered attention from the film studios and the blogger became an 'influencer', attaining

what Derrida refers to as *commandment,* whereby the archivist is recognised as an archivist, and receives a kind of 'authorisation' from the industry *post hoc*.[134] As Thilk set out to write a blog, not create an archive, his blog is an inadvertent, rather than deliberate archive, but I would argue its longevity means that it now constitutes a unique record of the development of online film promotion.

The blog provides links to film websites and these links often suffer the same fate seen in other online archives. But the value of this archive lies in its insight into the ways in which film promotion sites have developed over the period from EPK (electronic press kits) formats to more integrated film marketing experiences today. Blog posts chart evolving forms of engagement between producers and audiences as 'official' film websites link to 'fan' sites, and other social networking sites from Friendster to Facebook. The blog also illustrates how film websites formats have had to be mindful of different Internet access speeds, and software requirements as well as the incorporation of changing plug-ins and applications such as Flash, QuickTime, Google maps, and later to social media and mobile and apps.[135] Clearly the use of these technologies in film promotion illustrates Kittler's assertion that media 'produce[s] what it allegedly only reproduce[s]' with the shift from what are known as stand-alone 'destination' websites to socially integrated multimedia entertainment sites actively seeking to generate audience communities through its technical affordances.[136]

The most interesting blog posts are those that illustrate emerging film website conventions. Horror films have sites can contain elements designed to startle and surprise. For example, the viral campaign for *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004) in which mobile phone users received hoax messages saying they had been infected with a 'T-virus' and were directed to an online destination which turned out to be the film's site. [137] Or the site for Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriquez's double bill, *Grindhouse* (2007). On arrival at the site, when the image loads, the 'film' breaks and burns revealing the entrance to the site where the visitor can grab a machine gun and 'shoot up' the lobby[138]. While promotion for science fiction and fantasy films may be accompanied by in-movie website worlds that take the form of fictional institutional or industry sites as can be seen in the 'Paranormal Studies lab' website for *Ghostbusters* (2016), 'The Institute for Human Continuity' for Roland Emmerich's *2012* or Weylandindustries.com for Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* (2012). Instances like these illustrate how online film marketing has expanded its role to include story world exposition.

This blog provides a unique contemporaneous commentary on film promotion campaigns and an opportunity to track how websites have changed over time.[139] However, inevitably, an archive created by one individual has limitations too. Coverage is confined to English speaking, mostly American films, and sites for 'foreign language' films or films from other parts of the world barely figure in the blog at all. This means that in practice campaigns under consideration tend to spring from a limited number of Hollywood studios and marketing agencies.

But the most significant aspect of archives is that the blog redefines conventional understanding of who undertakes archival practices. In this instance, Thilk assumes the authority of Derrida's *archon* in a manner that is akin to the tradition of nineteenth century independent archivists. When individuals like Lt-General

Augustus Pitt Rivers, founder of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford simply assumed archonic authority to set up an archive of artefacts related to his fields of interest.[140] It makes sense that if archiving becomes an everyday practice because of the affordances of the web, then what gets archived will change too. From this perspective, individual interests will change what can be known in the future, about the past. What this example clearly shows is that cultural memory archives are no longer solely under the control of institutions but are subject to what has been described as 'distributed logic' of a new generation of web-based archives.[141]

Conclusions

This article has considered historical online film promotion since the advent of the internet. In historical terms this is the recent past, but as the account indicates, it has also been regarded as the 'vanishing present.' Tracing the development of the earliest iterations of digital-born promotion in the early 1990s certainly invokes parallels with the challenges faced by media historians of the early development of early film and live broadcast TV. As in a period of innovation and experimentation, there is less focus on record creation, preservation and prototypes get lost. Anecdotally, a senior creative marketing executive for one of the major American film studios told me in a recent interview that between 1995-2010, millions of dollars of work were simply deleted in the spirit of good digital housekeeping but along with it went early examples of digital film promotion.[142]

But what has this enquiry learnt about the first generations of film websites? In summary, it can make a number of general observations. Firstly, that the temporality of the artefact is part of its meaning. Through the Internet Archive historical examples of film websites can be accessed first-hand and the archive charts the lifespan of campaigns, as well as the composition of film websites at various stages in its development. Secondly, the archives revealed the extraordinary diversity of film promotional websites including the emergence of stylistic conventions, genres and aesthetics which suggest film promotion is not just a mirror of the films it advertises, but a form in its own right. Thirdly, archival examples illustrate the growing significance of promotion within the film industry and the changing relations of film to its promotion. And lastly, online promotion cannot be understood just in textural terms as the materiality of the medium is part of its meaning too. But alongside these insights, what was also clear from this archival investigation was a clear sense of the continuing precarity of digital promotional materials.

Today, creative professionals and design agencies often archive their work on their company websites. Individual designers curate personal websites displaying their work with screen shots, walk-throughs, links to campaign coverage and commentary highlighting their role in the creation of a campaign that function like a curriculum vitae. While marketing agencies use recent work, awards, and accolades as online shop window display to promote the agency. It is interesting to note that as film promotion budgets have increased, commentary has become increasingly elaborate with agencies providing accounts of promotional campaigns hat sometimes take the form of 'making of' films in their own right.

Film promotion campaigns are showcased on platforms like *Behance* where fellow professionals may view and show their appreciation. For example, *The Grand Budapest Hotel: Film Commission* on Tumblr site received a phenomenal 3.6k 'likes' and 42.2k views (as of 28th April 2022). So evidently *Behance* has become a significant locus of industry self-reflection (as well as self-congratulation). But as has been argued, researchers into film promotion research cannot just take producer's accounts at face value[143]. In this respect I concur with the position outlined in Johnson's article, that in order to get a fuller understand the film promotion industry context, a deeper understanding is needed of the circumstances in which they are produced. This remains an outstanding challenge for the examination of digital film promotional forms. But what research in these diverse archival settings has confirmed is the evolution of a new form of film promotion that plays an increasingly substantial role in film, beyond promotion. Film websites may provide exposition of the film's fictional world, provide factual information, introduce different narrative modes – counter narratives, transmedia narratives, and narrative 'experiences' and take on aspects of storytelling process that were previously the preserve of the film, confirming their interest as an artefact in their own right. While this article has begun to dig the foundations on which to build their history.

Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

Kim Louise Walden is Senior Lecturer: Film and Television Cultures in the School of Creative Arts at the University of Hertfordshire. Her current research interests include media archaeology and transmedia film marketing and promotion. She is the author of 'Nostalgia for the future: How *Tron: Legacy*'s paratextual campaign rebooted the franchise' in *The Politics of Ephemeral Digital Media* edited by Sara Pesce and Paolo Noto (Routledge, 2016); 'Searching for *D-9.com* in the archives: An archaeology of a film's website' *Interactions: Studies in Communications and Culture* 8 (1) 2017; and 'Building Better Worlds': The rise of *Alien*'s online marketing campaigns' in *Alien Legacies: The Evolution of the Franchise* (Oxford University Press, 2022). She is currently writing a book on online film promotion for Amsterdam University Press.