A new sense of motion:

framing the idea of the archive in the new information order

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An archive preserves

At an abstract level…

Derrida provides such a examples as circumcision as the archive of the covenant of the Jews

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Prosthetic epistemology

At a more concrete level…

Archives are documents in many working cases

They extend beyond print and paper documents to realia, visual materials, etc. but they are all

Prostheses of knowledge

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Container versus content

This is the divide between the knowledge and the document that contains that knowledge for information professionals

The goal is to 1) work only with the container for the most part, 2) work with that container as few times as possible

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example in Cataloging…

Thus, when information professionals catalog, the set standards and share records, so that when they catalog a book, they catalog it once.

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Usage

Thus, the information professional does not *move* the container more than they have to and further,

they avoid dealing with the content in favor of dealing with the container

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Usage

It is users (scholars, patrons, readers, students, etc.) that work with content.

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Usage

This is a gross simplification, and is used here to introduce the concept of *motion* in this short amount of time allotted

There are more formal ways of modeling container and content

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FRBR

Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records

Work

Manifestation

Expression

Item

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Container and Content

Work = content

Manifestation = container/content

Expression = container/content

Item = container

This is debated by information professionals

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Tripartite metaphor

S.R. Ranganathan

Atman

Subtle Body

Gross Body

Modeled after Vedanta idea of the human body and soul

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Tripartite metaphor

Atman = content

Subtle Body = content/container

Gross Body = container

Sees Atman as subject matter, not Work, less of an idea of authorship in this model

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Do Work and Atman move?

How did they move in a print world?

How should they move in all worlds?

Through containers.

Is digital media a container?

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DigiContainer

The digital world is a world of constant change

I would argue that it does not contain, but rather disseminates and guides content

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Disseminating and guiding content

What does it mean to say that digital media are not containers?

The notion of their movement is more pronounced.

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Disseminating and guiding content

Digital media, though not a container itself, it is a prosthesis of a work.

The movement of this prosthesis of a work requires another prosthesis, the prosthesis of the *manifestation or expression* (FRBR) or *subtle and gross bodies* (Ranganathan).

Digital media is not self contained.

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Movement of containers

Documents and realia (saving magnetic media)

Items that have been filmed are too, prostheses of works that are not containers, but rather are dependent on the prosthesis of the container. For film it is the reader of the film.

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How do you move containers or prostheses of containers?

In the digital environment there are at least two options:

Migration

Emulation

I will consider a third: evolution

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What about migration?

Is the translation of old programs to new most current program. Allowing the document to be read.

Reinvents the prosthetic container anew for each migration.

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What about migration?

Some say it is expensive.

Requires a quality management at the document level, which is time consuming and not thought of as practical.

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What about emulation?

Wraps metadata with document. This allows the software to read and emulate the system on which the document was created.

Wrapping a work in a decoder for its prosthetic container.

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What about emulation?

More cost effective

In the testing fields

Seems viable for many digi-things whose *atman* rests uniquely in the digital world

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What about evolution?

Changing the way we look at the simple act of keeping.

Can we expand this idea of keeping, reforming 'tough decisions' into 'priorities of evidence'.

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What about evolution?

I am idealist, we cannot sit back with the current mindset and hope it works itself out

Though this is a philosophical debate, we know through perception, why would we, in creating archives, set up uncertain paths to perception?

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What about evolution?

Evolution should show a change to:

Diversity

Complexity

Artfulness

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Diversity

Diversity in the types of information professionals

Diversity in cooperative institutions and clearinghouses for specialized types of preservation

Complementing each other, communicating with each other

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Diversity

Involvement by all types of information professionals in this, we have a stake, but those that would contribute, are not mobilized

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Complexity

Writing out the formal systems that make software a closed and working environment: one step beyond emulation

Can we have a book of code of defunct programs? One that, if we cared to see how and why we could, by reconstruction?

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Artfulness

Metadata – add add add to it

Can we describe what is going on? Is this too much like a Pliny history? Is this too much like a Cassiodorian Quadrivium?

Scholarship – the process of repackaging and adding value is a scholarly endeavor

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Artfulness

Utility is not the panacea

It was useful to reuse vellum sheets to practice writing scriptures over Aristotle

Many decisions are made on the idea of utility as it is understood today

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Does this change our concept of archive?

No. It changes our idea of the digital medium as dissemination tool, rather than as a container itself.

We may be limited in what containers are available to us. That shapes the concept of the archive. We need perceptible containers.

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The Archive

Theoretically, Derrida nailed this concept in his talk "Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression". First of all, there is no clear concept of an archive. It contains within itself, three or more strands: act, institution, people.
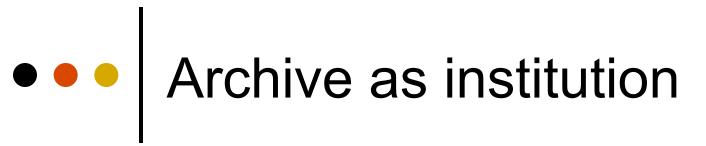
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Archives three strands

The archive is an act: it is the act of proclaiming this to be history, this to be the law that governs our perception of past knowledge, this can be both accidental and purposeful.

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Archive as person

The archon is the person who creates the archive.

This person, in my view, sets in motion, the idea of archive as an act. Further, with this act, comes the necessary social interactions, and from this an institution is built

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Archive as institution

And with those social interactions come the idea of the archive as institution.

Places, mores, policies, expectations, money…

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Preservation vs. Access

Another fascinating dichotomy (like content and container) that digital archives conjures is the trade-off between access and preservation.

Traditionally, there has been a trade off with preserving brittle books, and making them as accessible as possible.

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Preservation vs. Access

The reverse seems true here in the digital age.

By providing as much access as networked technologies allow, there is a lack of preservation capability.

Could this be a law?

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Law and the Archive

If it is, then the act of the archive becomes even more pressing, that making accessible, the item (as opposed to the work for example), or the gross body (as opposed to the atman) potentially changes the preservation status of that item or that particular gross body.

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Marked

That is to say, by use, these particulars, these items, are marked.

They are marked in that they are cut away slowly from the potentiality of being perceived.

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Marked

The same might be said, though not graphically perhaps, of digital documents.

They are marked by being digital. They are slowly (or quickly) moving out of the perceptible realm.

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Marked

Thus if they are not self evidently a unique atman in and of themselves as digital documents, the act of preservation, by the institution and person of the archive has a duty to make the record as perceptible as possible.

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A new sense of motion

In evolution: that there are a myriad of ways a diversity of folks can archive digital documents (perhaps as print).

Documents can only move through containers, and those containers rely on perception to be used.

Further, the decision of what constitutes an archive is up to the archon.

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