

**EUROPEAN
HISTORY
RELOADED**



Symposium 2021

October 7–8, 2021, Utrecht University

▶ October 7

10:00 — Room open / coffee

10:30 — Introduction / welcome

11:00 — **PANEL 1**

Ekaterina Lapina-Kratasyuk (*HSE University*) – Digital Memory Projects in Russia as Citizen Science: Historians, Media and Volunteers in Producing Pluralistic Past

Julia Harencourt & Jens van der Maele (*University of Luxembourg*) – Exploring the Past in Public: Recent Public History Exchanges in Southern Luxembourg

Corinna R. Kaiser (*University of Amsterdam*) – Remix, Playlist, Track: Radio DJ Concepts as Metaphors in Radio Archive Research

12:30 — Lunch

13:45 — **PANEL 2**

Philipp Dominik Keidl (*Goethe University Frankfurt*) – Objects Worth Filming: Disney Plus and the Platformization of Film History

E. Charlotte Stevens (*Birmingham School of Media*) – Fanvids as Interpretation and Marginalia

Abby S. Waysdorf (*Utrecht University*) – Cultures of Use and Reuse of Archival Material

15:15 — Break

15:30 — **PANEL 3**

Maxime Derian (*University of Luxembourg*) – More Than Recordings of History. The Use of Advanced Digital Tools for Oral History Interviews: Direct and Indirect Benefits

Maria Eriksson (*Umeå University*) – Tracking and Tracing Audiovisual Heritage: On the Development of the Video Reuse Detector

Melvin Wevers (*University of Amsterdam*) & **Thomas Smits** (*University of Antwerp*) – Shaping the Neoliberal Consumer, or How Computational Methods Can Help in Analyzing Dutch Historical Advertisements for Financial Products

▶ October 8

9:00 — Room open / coffee

9:30 — **PANEL 4**

Martin Babička (*University of Oxford*) – The 1990s On Demand: An Internet Guide to Czech Postsocialism

Vítězslav Sommer (*Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences*) – Decommunization as a Digital Utopia: Digitization of the Communist State Security Archives in the Czech Republic

Vera Zvereva (*University of Jyväskylä*) – Peering into Cultures of Digital Curiosities

11:00 — Break

11:15 — **PANEL 5**

Johan Oomen (*The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision*) – Zooming out, Zooming in, Stepping out: Exploring Archival Collections from Multiple Dimensions

Malte Hagener (*Philipps University Marburg*) – Towards a Digital Film History – Infrastructure, Method, Collaboration

Lars Wieneke (*University of Luxembourg*) – Remix after Regulation: Challenges for the Use of Audiovisual Archives in Digital History

12:45 — Closing Statements



MARTIN BABIČKA, University of Oxford

The 1990s On Demand: An Internet Guide to Czech Postsocialism

The first decade after 1989 has been a hot topic not only of academic historians but also of popular culture: books, songs, television serials or internet memes are abundant with images of the first postsocialist years. In the Czech Republic, selective and implicitly political story of “unbridled freedom” has been a commercially successful and widely shared narrative, with Johana Fundová’s project Pure Nineties (Pure devadesátky) becoming first an internet hit on Facebook and Instagram only to be later turned into a book that many Czechs found under the Christmas tree. The internet, however, sometimes provides more “edgy” content than a sequences of nostalgic and bizarre recollections, challenging the mainstream optimistic story of the postsocialist transformation and perhaps even unwittingly expressing critical viewpoints of some professional historians. Yet at other times, the internet also works as an external storage that can provide entertainment by recalling memetic scenes from old television programmes or be activated at moments of nostalgia. The paper will analyse and compare diverse practices of remembering the Czech postsocialism online, paying special attention to the ways original content is recontextualized and images and narratives rewritten in the form of pastiche, retro, nostalgia, distancing from the bizarre, or blurring the lines between fiction and reality, among others. Furthermore, it will introduce several internet memes that defy the dominant liberal narrative and give stereotypical images of the past a new meaning.



MAXIME DERIAN, University of Luxembourg

More than Recordings of History: The Use of Advanced Digital Tools for Oral History Interviews – Direct and Indirect Benefits

This 20-minutes presentation will deal with audiovisual recordings of life history interviews with older people, using a socio-anthropological methodology within a framework of benevolent neutrality combined with state-of-the-art digital technologies (professional digital camera, high fidelity audio recorder, photo studio lighting, asset management program for multimedia workflow processing...) which, at first sight, might seem over-dimensioned for conducting interview in oral history / public history.

This lecture will discuss at first the need for reciprocal give-and-take¹ interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. Then it will present various advantages of this research approach combining this anthropological methodology with these digital tools, notably:

- for the researchers: with the production of new historical sources (native digital archival material of high resolution) that can be easily exploited in an academic research perspective;
- or the interviewees: both on a psychological level (self-esteem, verbalisation, putting a life course into perspective, etc.) at the time of the interview itself and, later, as a testimony and collection of a family memory;

- with a view to producing scientific and historical exhibitions: need for large images, high resolution video and high-definition soundscapes to “remix” archival material, scientific data, art and scientific popularisation. Respectful of the trust placed in researchers and presenting to the general public the recent popular history of a region (the Minett region of Luxembourg, for instance) through the memory of the elders.

This presentation is part of the C2DH research project “Remixing Industrial Pasts in the Digital Age²”. It addresses several themes of the European history reloaded 2021 symposium such as archival practices and digitisation policies, cultural practices of video remix, the transformation or creation of historical narratives through remix, memorial practices and historical consciousness in the digital age.

1. Cf. “exchange of gift” in Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge, London, 1990.

2. <https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/projects/remixing-industrial-pasts-digital-age-sounds-images-ecologies-practices-and-materialities>



MARIA ERIKSSON, Umeå University

Tracking and Tracing Audiovisual Heritage: On the Development of the Video Reuse Detector

How can the “social life” (Appadurai 1986) and “cultural biographies” (Kopytoff 1986) of moving images be traced and tracked as they are reused through history? In what ways can machine learning methods help scholars and archivists uncover the multitude of ways through which audiovisual content is recontextualized and given new cultural meanings through time? In this talk, I will introduce the CADEAH-team’s work with developing a toolbox called the Video Reuse Detector (or VRD), which assists in the detection of visual similarities in video archives. The VRD was assembled because of a lack of open-source solutions for audiovisual copy detection and is inspired by the recent “visual turn” (Wevers and Smits 2019) in historical and digitally oriented humanities research. It comprises a series of scripts and techniques for preparing datasets, comparing audiovisual content, and visualising how and when moving images reemerge within an archive, and is available through the interactive computing environment and programming interface Jupyter Notebooks. My talk will briefly introduce the VRD’s computations workflow, explain some of the basic logics and ideas behind the toolkit, and reflect on some lessons learnt during the process of designing and assembling the software.



MALTE HAGENER, Philipps University Marburg

Towards a Digital Film History - Infrastructure, Method, Collaboration

In 2021, we can no longer claim that the digital is a radically new development. Nevertheless, in the field of film history, the digital seems not to have made larger inroads so far. I want to argue that we have not really understood – and implemented - “the digital” if we continue to see it as a largely technological process (consequently labelled “digitization”, a term I will argue we should discard altogether). Instead, I propose the three terms “infrastructure”, “method” and “collaboration” as fields of action where changes have to be made, if we want to seriously take advantage of the chances and affordances that the digital offers. We need not only a new theoretical understanding of infrastructure, method, and collaboration, but also a new practice of dealing with these factors, as well as creative ways of taking care of them. Taking the digital seriously consequently does not mean to simply step across a threshold, but it implies a continuous transformative movement that we have to integrate into our field. Only if we see the digital not as something external to our work, can we truly enter a new era in which “remix” allows for novel approaches and results.



JULIA HARNONCOURT and **JENS VAN DE MAELE**, University of Luxembourg

Exploring the Past in Public: Recent Public History Exchanges in Southern Luxembourg

In September and October 2020, the “Remix” team of the Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH, University of Luxembourg) organized a so-called “temporary history lab” in the Luxembourgish town of Esch-sur-Alzette. Dedicated to the social and industrial history of the erstwhile steelmaking region of Esch, this lab offered possibilities for exchanges between historians and inhabitants: we invited passers-by to share their perspectives on the industrial past, while scanning equipment allowed for the digitization of personal objects such as photo albums. This crowdsourcing event was complemented by an interactive video presentation, which was projected on the outside window of the history lab, and which could be activated by passers-by.

The interactive video presentation on the region’s history was a joint effort between the Remix team (which took responsibility for the archival research and the narratives) and the Italian scenography team Tokonoma (which took care of the technical development, graphic design, animations, and soundtrack). The video featured stories narrated by seven characters, including (among others) a turn-of-the-century miner, a resistance fighter from the Second World War, a medical doctor responsible for air pollution analysis in the 1950s, and a present-day historian (who offered a meta perspective on the video itself). The historiographical status of the various stories differed from one narrative to the other: some were exclusively based on texts

originally written by the character in question, others were semi-fictional (presenting a real person but partly based on an invented narration), while some were entirely fictional (presenting a completely invented persona). In all cases, archival sources were at the basis of the narration. As such, the Remix team also unearthed a large number of visuals in local archives (including early twentieth-century photographic positives on glass plates). Digitized for the occasion and integrated in the video, these visual sources will also become part of a future virtual exhibition, which will be launched in 2022 as part of the “Esch-sur-Alzette, European Capital of Culture” event.

Apart from presenting the general development of the interactive video, we want to address the challenges and opportunities that arose from organizing a public history event in a public space. While it is clear that the video sparked the interest of many passers-by, the direct impact on the accompanying crowdsourcing event remained limited. Additional challenges arose from technical issues (such as the necessity to have the narratives activated without touching any knobs, in order to be “corona proof”), as well as from concerns over the languages that were to be used in Luxembourg’s highly multilingual southern region (where Luxembourgish, German, and French coexist alongside “migration influx” languages such as Portuguese and Italian).

www.c2dh.uni.lu/events/temporary-history-lab-become-part-history



CORINNA R. KAISER, University of Amsterdam

Remix, Playlist, Track: Radio DJ Concepts as Metaphors in Radio Archive Research

In December 1906, Reginald A. Fessenden played the Largo from Händel's "Xerxes" on air from a wax cylinder. He thus became the first radio DJ. Today, playing pre-recorded music is the backbone of radio programming. Over time, radio DJing developed its own concepts, techniques, and terms that differ from club DJing even though the former was the basis for the latter. The paper discusses how concepts such as remix, playlist, or track can be used productively in radio archive research and in making the research data accessible to the scholarly as well as informed lay user. The discussion draws on examples from the research project "TRACE – Tracking Radio Archival Collections in Europe 1930-1960" and the study of the archive of the German national broadcast service (Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft, or RRG). The radio archive – the material holdings as well as the catalogue (e.g. index cards, printed catalogues, digital databases) – is being remixed constantly (Rinehart 2018; von Brauchitsch 1939; (Kaiser/Birdsall 2020, 2021). From 1933 on, the RRG archive holdings were remixed and external Nazi recordings added to create an antisemitic 'völkisch' audio track of Germany's recent history and present. Discs were constantly moved between the headquarters in Berlin and local stations. With air strikes on German cities and the advance of Allied forces, archival holdings were moved for safeguarding. Immediately after the war, some holdings were taken to Allied countries, and the post-war radio archives in West and East Germany inherited parts of the RRG collection which, with the German reunification, were remixed again. While TRACE started with the aim to rebuild or reconstruct the complete catalogue of the RRG holdings, it soon emerged that our research creates something new, yet another remix.



PHILIPP DOMINIK KEIDL, Goethe University Frankfurt

Objects Worth Filming: Disney Plus and the Platformization of Film History

Taking the series “Prop Culture” (2020) as a case study, this paper analyses the platformization of film history by Disney Plus. Scholars have argued that subscription-based streaming platforms contribute to the reconceptualization of film archives into film libraries (Verheul, 2020), transforming old films into cultural and economic currency by redistributing them online. In comparison to theatrical-released films, however, making-of-documentaries like “Prop Culture” have found comparatively little attention in these debates. Covering films such as “Mary Poppins” (1964) and “Who Framed Roger Rabbit” (1988), each of the eight episodes focuses on individual objects that prominently featured in these films and their production and reception. This includes props, costumes, merchandise, and other “paraproduction” materials (Rehak, 2018). By offering access to Disney’s highly protected collections of the Walt Disney Archives, this paper argues, “Prop Culture” demonstrates the importance and probability of historical object collections in the production of original content on film history for streaming platforms.

The commodification of film history is particularly evident in Disney Plus’s adaptation of serial storytelling and the development of the format of the behind-the-scenes-docuseries to explore the studio’s archival collections. If streaming services are a continuation of early library catalogues of film distributors (Hoyt, 2014) and the home movie market (Benson-Allott, 2013), which also came with distinct making-of productions and paratextual information (Gray, 2010), the behind-the-scenes-docuseries is emblematic for subscription-based streaming platforms. The paper will discuss the format of the behind-the-scenes-docuseries from two perspectives. First, it places the format in a longer history of paratexts that focus on films’ production and reception, highlighting the narrative importance of material culture in the construction of film history and collective memory. Second, it positions the show within the context of nonfiction transmedia storytelling, in which the history of a singular production, franchise or studio is constructed across various media. As such, the paper will foreground the significance of behind-the-scenes-docuseries for platforms in winning new subscribers as well as controlling Disney’s corporate and artistic image.



EKATERINA LAPINA-KRATASYUK, HSE University

Digital Memory Projects in Russia as Citizen Science: Historians, Media and Volunteers in Producing Pluralistic Past

While the authorities' trend to control public representations of history and memory in Russia has been increasing during the last decade, the number of small scale grass roots digital resources dedicated to history of the XX century and based on archive of personal memories has grown proportionally. Some of these digital archives collect and process autobiographic narratives and diaries, others are made of photographs of people and objects accompanied by descriptions and discussions. These digital archives create a heterogeneous and (mostly) pluralistic media content which looks like opportunity to balance the uniform space of official history. Moreover, the way of creativity which implies the close interaction of software developers, historians, bloggers, journalists and representatives of general audience leads to gathering of new types of semi-academic communities, helping to emerge discussions over what was claimed indisputable. In my talk I will present the contemporary panorama of Russian digital memory archives, and analyze their aims, content and audiovisual tools used to make remixes of well known historical events and personalities by deconstructing narratives about them with individual stories. My research questions are as follows. What are the methods and conditions of collaboration of academic scholars, media and volunteers who are the main authors of the digital archives' content? What works and doesn't work in this collaboration and why? What is the impact of digital memory and oral history open archives on historical environment in contemporary Russia?



VÍTĚZSLAV SOMMER, Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Decommunization as a Digital Utopia: Digitization of the Communist State Security Archives in the Czech Republic

This paper discusses the issue of the digitization of the archival materials of the Czechoslovak State Security (StB), the most important instrument of repressive policy during state socialism (1948–1989). After 1989, a number of public disputes arose around the issue of the vast archive of the communist ministry of the interior. This situation reverberated in historiography, as well as in a broader public debate on what was called “coming to terms with the communist past”. With the arrival of digital technologies, digitization became a central point of this long and politicized debate. Seemingly a technical problem – digitization of archival materials that had been created by the State Security between 1948 and 1989 – became a battlefield of bitter disputes over who and how these materials should be stored, made accessible and interpreted.



CHARLOTTE STEVENS, Birmingham School of Media

Fanvids as Interpretation and Marginalia

This presentation reflects on fanvids as works of historical interpretation. Fanvids are made using existing video clips, arise from a set of subcultural fandom practices predominantly practiced by women and non-binary fans, and take aesthetic cues from commercial music videos. They also construct creative and critical analyses of existing media, primarily television and film. Jonathan Gray (2010) has argued that a fanvid provides a path through the vid's source text: the vidder enacts audio-visual marginalia, commenting on significant moments and analysing the source text. Vidders therefore also enact archival work, in collecting and re-presenting older clips. The analysis of vids can be a fascinating starting point for discussing histories, memories, and practices of watching television.

Home media collections have created conditions for vidding's creative expression and critical analysis. I will contrast two vids made from UK crime drama *The Professionals* (ITV, 1977-1983), one from 1994 made from worn-out videotape and a more recent example that uses 'cleaner' digital transfers, to discuss the archival look of fanvids in relation to bootleg textures. These are visible archival traces on videotape fanvids, which signal the unofficial distribution networks of off-air recordings and the practice of returning to favourite scenes that cause wear on the tape itself. The selective use of clips and the wear evident on the copies strongly indicate a viewer's favourite moments, telling a story about historical practices of re-viewing, interpretation, and memorialization of popular media texts. Melvin Wevers (University of Amsterdam) & Thomas Smits (University of Antwerp): *Shaping the Neoliberal Consumer, or How Computational Methods Can Help in Analyzing Dutch Historical Advertisements for Financial Products*. In the last two decades, millions of historical newspaper pages have been digitized. This digitized form enables scholars to apply computational methods to identify trends and patterns in their textual

and visual content. Known for their complex interplay between text and image, advertisements are a particularly rich source in these newspapers. In previous research (Wevers & Smits, 2020), we applied Deep Learning techniques to test and explore well-known theories of gender in advertising discourse (Goffman, 1979). We repurposed facial recognition techniques to study the distribution of male and female faces in one million Dutch advertisements taken from the *NRC Handelsblad* between 1950-1995. During this research, the highly heterogeneous nature of advertisements became clear to us. Therefore, we needed a method to focus on particular subsets of advertisements. In this paper, we discuss how we used computational methods to make a corpus of historical advertisements for financial products and services. We present a workflow to analyze both textual and visual content in these advertisements that is assisted by computational means. This allows us to scale up the detection of specific codes in advertising discourse. As Baudrillard (1998) pointed out, the market inscribes a system of cultural meanings into commodities. And through commodities, social identities are realized (Holt, 2002). Scholars have identified a shift in consumer culture that relied on cultural engineering to brand products using meanings that consumers valued to a system in which 'consumers form communities around brands ... [claiming] to be doing their own thing while doing it with thousands of like-minded others.' This focus on the supposed freedom to construct the self resonates with Foucault's notions of biopolitics (Slater, 1997), and intersects with the neoliberal political economy in which the self is commodified (McDonald et al, 2017). In our paper, we propose several computational methods that can provide insight into the ways in which advertisements for financial products helped shape the neoliberal consumer.



ABBY S. WAYS DORF, Utrecht University

Cultures of Use and Reuse of Archival Material

How are digitized archival materials used? A simple question with a great deal of potential answers. A digitized, accessible archival environment means that archival material can be drawn on as part of everyday life and vernacular creativity, a sort of “craft shop” for people used to relying on easily-accessible media content. These developments can be both a challenge and an opportunity for archives, with new narratives about the past coming through remixes and new meaning given to material as it gets drawn into online habits. This paper reflects on the use and reuse of digital archival material, based around an ethnographic consideration of remix (Waysdorf, 2021) and de Kosnik’s (2016) explorations of using digital archives as a personal or group repertoire to regularly return to. Drawing on two very different case studies - “vaporwar” military remix videos and the curation practices of Eurovision fans - I show the roles that digital archives and archival material can play in online communities, and what this might suggest for archives in the rush to digitize and “make accessible.”



MELVIN WEVERS, University of Amsterdam & **THOMAS SMITS**, University of Antwerp

Shaping the Neoliberal Consumer, or How Computational Methods Can Help in Analyzing Dutch Historical Advertisements for Financial Products

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LARS WIENEKE, University of Luxembourg

Remix after Regulation: Challenges for the Use of Audiovisual Archives in Digital History

When Newton set birth to the modern scientific endeavour by evoking the “shoulders of giants” he also outlined what the remix or re-use of data and sources could mean in the end: an almost infinite pool of evidence, mangled and re-worked by a transnational community that continuously adapts and refines what exists to create new insights and opportunities. He didn’t foresee though, that the very tools we would build to tame the deluge of information would create their own challenges through diverging and inconsistent or obsolete formats . Nor did he consider the inevitable need to regulate the use of these very tools to protect the personal information of their users or the idea of copyright and its myriad fine grained perspectives.

This presentation will try to cast a light on the technical challenges of accessing, preserving, improving and altering archival records by highlighting the potential of a scientific remix culture. At the same time, it will point out the legal and organisational challenges that such projects face and the treacherous quagmire researchers of contemporary history encounter when they want to reuse and publish existing sources.



VERA ZVEREVA, University of Jyväskylä

Peering into Cultures of Digital Curiosities

The digitization of archives, museum collections and libraries, and the spread of the Internet and social media have created a situation in which the composition and use of non-professional knowledge of the past is undergoing profound changes. Visual materials from different eras and cultures, such as paintings, book illustrations, photographs, images of museum exhibits, magazine covers, advertising images, architectural drawings, etc., circulate freely, digitized, on social networks in large quantities, seldom with reference to their historical contexts. Their very presence has become a familiar part of the everyday media environment. What kind of knowledge of the past are they offering for the public?

In this talk, I explore social media users' perspectives on and their interactions with visuals from digitized archives. Using examples from Pinterest, Facebook and YouTube, I will try to show what features of historical knowledge arise in the daily consumption and reuse of visual materials. I will revisit the notion of "digital curiosities" proposed in Melissa Terras' works, look at it from a different angle and explore the epistemological potential of the metaphors of the digital curiosity, digital collections and cabinets of curiosities, and the contemporary digital amateur antiquarian.

▶ Practical Information



TRAVEL

For those travelling to Utrecht from abroad, we will be reimbursing your travel costs. Please book your own tickets and save all receipts (including those from ground transportations). Then fill out the following reimbursement form:

www.uu.nl/en/organisation/practical-matters/finance

using the WBS number **GW.000808.5**,
with **Eggo Müller** (e.muller@uu.nl)
as the contact person.

HOTEL

For those travelling to Utrecht from abroad, a room has been reserved in your name at the NH Centre Utrecht, Janskerhof 10.

www.nh-hotels.com/hotel/nh-centre-utrecht

For the nights of **October 6 and 7**.

This will be directly covered by the symposium budget.

▶ Online Participation



▶ **European History Reloaded Symposium 2021 (Oct 7, 2021)**

Oct 7, 2021 09:30 AM Budapest

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8163041886?pwd=aVdQcERTaFV6M2VjVmg1YW5ndE9ZQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 304 1886

Passcode: 479213

▶ **European History Reloaded Symposium 2021 (Oct 8, 2021)**

Oct 8, 2021 08:30 AM Budapest

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8163041886?pwd=aVdQcERTaFV6M2VjVmg1YW5ndE9ZQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 304 1886

Passcode: 479213