

Digital Archives Literacy

Lavet af:

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Instructions

Part 1 (Approx. 250 words):

Write 250 words explaining how Schriver and Jensen (2022) apply their overall arguments regarding the relationship between digital archives and historical research to the specific case they examine.

In their article, Schriver and Jensen argue that digital archives are not just places where old things are stored. Instead, they argue that these archives help shape how history is written. They use the example of the digital photo archive *Danmark set fra luften – før Google* (DSFL) to show how this happens in practice. The DSFL archive was made by the Royal Library to give people access to old aerial photos of Denmark. But the archive is not just a collection of images. It was shaped by things like money, laws, and the people it was made for. The library wanted the archive to be useful for regular people, like family or local history fans, not just researchers. This meant they chose certain photos and left others out.

For example, some photos were not added because of copyright problems. Others were left out because they were hard to place on the digital map. Also, information like handwritten notes on old prints was removed, even though it could have been interesting for historians. This shows how choices made during the project affect what kind of history can be told.

Schrivier and Jensen use this case to show that digital archives are not neutral. They are built in certain ways and for certain people who have certain goals. Because of this, historians need to be careful and think more about how these archives are made and what they include or leave out.

Part 2 (750–1000 words, cohesive and well-edited):

Write 750–1000 words addressing the following questions. Be sure to make references throughout to Schriver and Jensen (2022), Pomerantz (2015), as well as Jensen (2021), where relevant:

1. Briefly analyze the two institutions behind these digital resources. What do you know about the institutions in terms of their funding, strategies, mandates, etc.—especially as they relate to digitization strategies?

1.a. <https://natmus.dk/museer-og-slote/frihedsmuseet/historisk-viden/fotoarkiv/>

The National museum is a part of the Danish Ministry of Culture and is therefore state funded. The National Museum' strategy is to strengthen historical consciousness and citizenship by showing

Danish and world culture and their dependence. They will achieve this by creating headlines, working together between institutions and prioritizing the audience.

2. b. <https://www.naestvedarkiverne.dk/brug-samlingerne>

Næstved Archives' strategy is to focus on digitalization and to ensure access, authenticity, and long-term preservation of both public and private archival materials. This forces the staff to make conscious decisions about what to collect, - especially from privately sourced digital material - as well as the development of new digital solutions. Increased accessibility also requires high standards for security, confidentiality, and authenticity, so that the material can be used locally and nationally by citizens, authorities and researchers. Their funding is primarily through foundations.

2. Find sources from Næstved in the Frihedsmuseets fotoarkiv, and sources related to the Occupation in NæstvedArkiverne.

Here is a screenshot of a photo of railway sabotage in Næstved found in Frihedsmuseets fotoarkiv



Here is a screenshot of an article in the newspaper Næstved Tidende announcing the end of the occupation.



3. Describe how you found these sources. Where did you search, and what search terms did you use?

The first photo was found by using Frihedsmuseets website and searching for “fotoarkiv”, and then clicking the map function. After finding Næstved on the map it then showed that there are 53 photos from Næstved. We then choose a photo by the railway station.

The second photo was found using NæstvedArkiverne's hjemmeside. By simply searching for "besættelse" it yields plenty of sources about the occupation in Næstved. We then clicked "Hverdag under besættelsen" and selected "Næstved Tidende 5. maj 1945".

4. What can you say about the provenance of the sources you found? For example, what information do you have about the record's creator (arkivskaber), the collection/context (samling/serie) it was part of when created, etc.?

The photo of the sabotage has little information about its origin. It doesn't carry a date or name of the photographer, but only that it is under group "8. B. Sjælland" and the Neg.nr. is "159o4". The record creator, however, is Frihedsmuseet, and it is a part of a collection about photos from the occupation between 1940 and 1945.

The Næstved Tidende article was a part of a daily newspaper collection and was published on May 5th, 1945. It was originally printed as a physical newspaper and later digitalized. The record creator in this case is NæstvedArkiverne, and the article is also a part of a collection called "Hverdagen under bæsættelsen," which is available on their website.

5. (Hint: You might find the needle, but what do you know about the haystack you're searching in?)

Our knowledge of the archives are limited as we haven't worked with them before. The outcome of our use of the archives depend on the digitalization choices of the archive and the metadata that their search functions operate on. This point is perfectly illustrated by Jensen and Schriver.¹

6. Is it possible to obtain information about related material from the same record creators (arkivskaber) that has not been digitized?

Since the article is a part of a daily newspaper there should be a lot of articles from the same creator. The reason why this specific article is used is because it says something about the end of the German occupation of Denmark. You could presume that articles from the day before or maybe after that simply wrote about daily life and therefore have not been digitized yet, since it does not contain anything relating to the theme at hand or not deemed worthy to put on their website.

7. What information is available about the digitization process? For example, workflow (OCR, ML, crowdsourcing), technical specifications, quality checks, or metadata structure/vocabulary.

Næstved arkiverne:

When you access "Næstvedarkiverne" website, you can from there go to "Om arkivet" → Vedtægter, strategi og årsberetninger.

Although the different kinds of information does not say anything particular about their precise workflow. It does inform you about their overall strategies and how they collect their different kinds of information². Economic resources are given by the Danish state, private investors and like all Danish archival work is dependent on volunteer work. However it's obvious to see the missing focus on how the archival records are processed. The administrative and use metadata on this website is very peripheral and not very detailed, which as a historian we would like to see more expanded on.

Nationalmuseet:

¹ Astrid Ølgaard Christensen Schriver and Helle Strandgaard Jensen, "Arkivets digitalisering. En ny udfordring til historisk metode?", 2022

² [Vedtægt for NæstvedArkiverne](#)

Nationalmuseet is much worse according to information on the workflow, how they use the data, which data is used, why they use and so on. The only specific thing is that all archival records which have been digitized are copyright free, which means according to law no singular person or institution owns its rights.³ This can also be said about "Næstved arkiverne"

8. How would you cite the digital source versus the original analog? Does the archive provide any guidance?

When citing digital sources, the way to proceed would be to name the archive or the institution, and include the title and/or the description of the source. It would also be a good idea to include the URL, and date of access to the file, since the source is digitalized it can be changed or be removed.

When citing an original analog, you should name the Archive, journal number and possibly a box/file and file number.

Both "Nationalmuseet" and "Næstvedarkiverne" provides some guidance for citing sources. On the website of Nationalmuseet, you will be able to find a guideline under "Samlinger Online" ← "Rettigheder og brug".

The online guidelines provided from Næstvedarkiverne, which we could find, was a guidance for citing photos. This could be found under "NæstvedArkiverne" ← "Brug samlingerne" ← "vejledninger" ← "Rettigheder og brug af fotos".

9. Based on your answers above, how well do you feel able to apply source criticism to the digital sources when conducting historical research on the Occupation in Næstved? Please explain your reasoning.

We would feel decently confident in using source criticism on digital sources, when it comes to photos and documents from the Næstved Archives. We will try to pay attention to who created the source, where it's from, and the context in which it was preserved and made available (if possible). From one of our earlier answers, we can see that the author and origin of the source might not always be available.

Although, there might be some challenges, like when there's no metadata, or it's unclear whether the material is complete. As answered earlier, not everything from the Occupation of Næstved has been digitized, so the digital version might only show fragments of the whole context. It is therefore important to stay critical of what might be missing.

Part 3 (250 words, cohesive and well-edited):

Based on the course sessions (including hands-on experiences) and your answers above, discuss how the digitalization process and digital sources relate to historical research and methodologies. Is it, for instance, but not mandatory, possible to apply core historical research methods to the digitalization process (why? - Why not?)

³ [Rettigheder og brug - Nationalmuseet](#)

The digitization of historical sources is very important for how we research history today. Based on the sessions of this course, we know that digital tools open up new possibilities, like more quantitative research, we need to reflect critically on our methods and how we analyze our sources. Digital sources are more accessible, searchable, and easier to share, but a negative consequence can be that we need to be critical of what may have been left out or changed.

Historical methods when analyzing original analogs are still crucial when working with digital sources. They might even be more important. A “copied” document might not show physical characteristics like handwriting and paper texture, which possibly can have an important role in the analysis. Digital platforms often provide only selected parts of larger archival collections. In these cases we must examine who has digitized the sources, what is missing, and why has the selected part been digitized.

It is possible to apply historical research methods to the digitization process. Digitalization is not neutral, but reflects institutional/archives’ priorities and technological limits. We need to analyze what gets digitized, who funds the archives/digitization, and how it is being presented online to the user. So while digital sources might give a new view and access to history, they do not remove critical historical thinking, but now we need more of it.

Please Note:

The paper must be at least 1,250 words, but it may not exceed 2,500 words (excluding references and illustrations).

The total word count must be stated.

1823 words with questions.