

CMS.635/835 (Fall 2021):

Designing Active Archives

Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:30 - 5:00 PM, **Room:** 1-277

Instructor: Kurt Fendt, office hour W 2:00 -3:00 PM, room 14N-421 or by appointment, email: fendt@mit.edu

Stellar/LMOD Site:

<https://learning-modules.mit.edu/class/index.html?uuid=/course/CMS/fa21/CMS.635#info>

Github Site: <https://cms635.github.io>

Slack Channel: mit-cms635.slack.com

Annotation Studio: <https://app.annotation.studio>

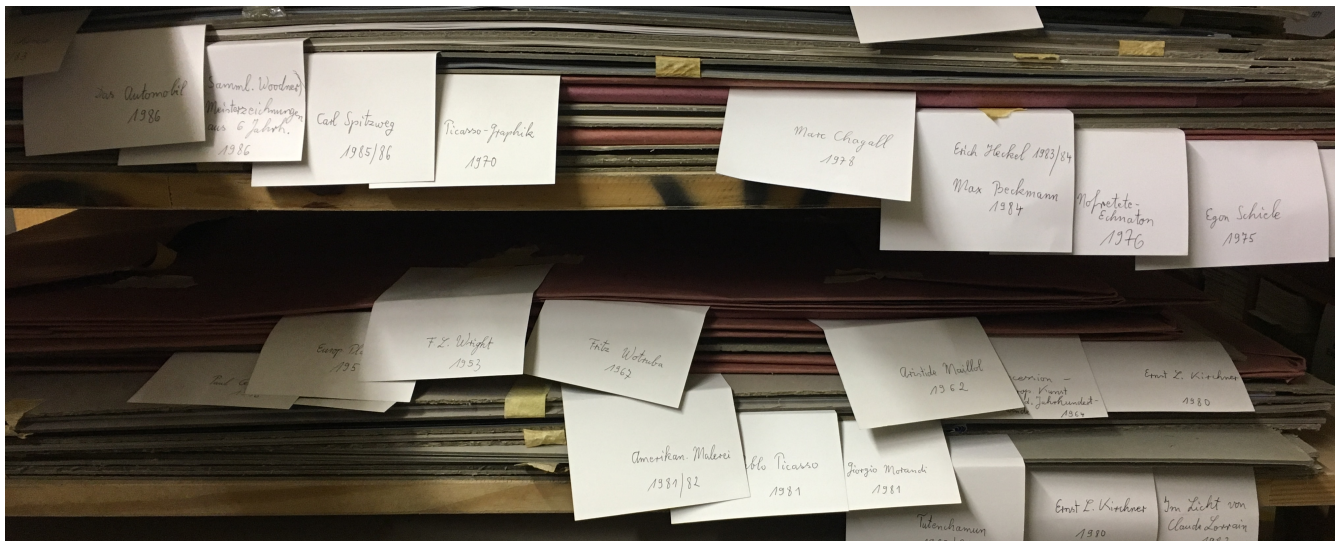


Photo: Archive, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2019)

This project-based Digital Humanities subject investigates the digital archive as an emerging platform for critical inquiry and creative engagement through analysis, seminar discussion, and experimentation with user-oriented design. Weekly readings will provide theoretical, analytical, and practical perspectives from multiple academic fields, including media studies, cultural studies, UI/UX design, and information science. These readings will address a range of topics, including participatory digital culture, data curation, visualization, and the archive's role in activism. Students choose a final group project at the beginning of class to be developed throughout the semester. In this project, students will have the opportunity to work directly with institutional archives at MIT, Harvard, and others, designing novel user experiences based on their collections. Students taking graduate version complete additional readings and assignments. Digital Humanities (CMS.633/833) is NOT a prerequisite for this subject.

Format and Requirements

This course consists of reading discussions, archival explorations, demonstrations of tools and techniques, hands-on project work time, and collaboration on final group projects. In addition, guest speakers who work in museums, archives, libraries, and design labs discuss their work in class or at site visits. Students are expected to participate in class discussions on readings, project presentations, and review sessions. Students

annotate readings using the tool Annotation Studio and contribute weekly reading comments as well as project updates on the class' Github site. Graduate students are expected to discuss extra readings and lead class discussions. Project teams are formed at the beginning of the semester to work on the final group project which will have to be completed along with a design document by the end of the term.

Learning objectives

After taking this course you should be able to:

- Understand the creative potential of digital archives, shaped by theoretical readings and project-based work;
- Create concepts, approaches, and implementations for novel user experiences with digital archives, informed by a working knowledge of computational tools and principles of user interface design;
- Use the theories and works presented in this course to frame and support discussions and critiques of contemporary archival work, the potential of archives for diverse audiences, and future possibilities of archives.

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

- Final project (40%), including design paper and prototype
- Short projects (15%)
- Presentations and project updates (15%)
- Class participation (15%)
- Reading comments on Annotation Studio and Github (15%)

Class attendance is required for all Monday and Wednesday sessions. Unexcused absences result in a lower grade. There will be no final exam in the class.

Students will be annotating selected readings using the web-based tool *Annotation Studio* (<https://app.annotation.studio>). In addition, students post weekly reading comments and project updates on the class' Github site.

For each class, a student is responsible for leading the discussion on the assigned readings, graduate students will be assigned additional readings.

Project work for this class includes working with digital content (digital artifacts, metadata, extracted data) from the MIT-Museum (MIT's Black Oral History Project) and the Latin-American Hidden Museum Project in direct interaction with curators, archivists, artists, designers, and museum curators. Main deliverable for the final class project is a detailed design paper (15 pages) and a functional prototype (MVP).

Avoid *plagiarizing*. **Plagiarism** is the use of another's intellectual work without acknowledgment. Full acknowledgment for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work submitted. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasings taken from someone else's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Use quotation marks to identify all sources of wording that are not yours. Identify sources of ideas with appropriate footnoting. Plagiarism receives an F in the subject, the instructor is required to forward the case to the Committee on Discipline. See <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/avoiding-plagiarism/> for more information.

The WCC at MIT (**Writing and Communication Center**) offers *free* one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are published scholars and writers. Not

counting the WCC's director's years (he started the WCC in 1982), the WCC lecturers have a combined 134 years' worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 4 to 24 years), so they are intimately familiar with MIT culture and with the academic and professional expectations of all fields. The WCC works with undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, spouses and partners. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing (dissertations, theses, papers for courses, proposals, articles for publication, job applications and CVs) as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks, and designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street). To guarantee yourself a time, please make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/> . To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/> . Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

Syllabus (Version 1 - September 1, 2021)

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments
Week 1 September 8	Archives: From Institutional Storage to Critical Platform, Introduction <i>In-class Activity:</i> Archival Experiences
Week 2 September 13	From Physical to Digital Archives Guest Speaker: Debbie Douglas, MIT Museum <i>Readings:</i> Kate Theimer: <i>The Future of Archives is Participatory: Archives as Platform, or A New Mission for Archives</i> , ArchivesNext Blog, 2014) Graduate students also read: Isto Huvila, <i>Participatory Archive: Towards Decentralised Curation, Radical User Orientation, and Broader Contextualisation of Records Management</i> , in: <i>Archival Science</i> , 8-1 2008, 15-36. <i>Assignment:</i> Post concise reading comments on articles with a focus on criteria for participatory archives, explore original MIT Black History Website: https://www.blackhistory.mit.edu
September 15	From Physical to Digital Archives <i>Reading:</i> Mike Featherstone, <i>Archive</i> , in: <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> , 23-2-3 (2006), 591-596 <i>Assignment:</i> Evaluate and present an online cultural heritage archive of your choice
Week 3 September 20	Archival Initiatives: Non-institutional Archives Guest Speakers: Tomas Andres Guarna & Lucas Mertehikian (MIT, Harvard U.) - The Hidden Museum of Latin American Art <i>Readings:</i> Anne Burdick et al., <i>Digital_Humanities</i> (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2012), pp. 32-34 (Enhanced Critical Curation). Graduate students: ibd., pp. 47-49 (The Animated Archive)
September 22	Archives and Memory: A Media-archeological Perspective <i>Readings:</i> Wolfgang Ernst, <i>Underway to the Dual System: Classical Archives and Digital Memory</i> , in <i>Digital Memory and the Archive</i> , 2013, pp. 81-94 Graduate Students: ibd., <i>Archives in Transition: Dynamic Media Memories</i> , pp. 95-101 <i>Activity:</i> Discussion of final projects
Week 4 September 27	Curation and Online Archives - The Bauhaus Archive and APIs, Harvard Art Museums <i>Assignment:</i> Digital curation via scraping and APIs ; first presentation of concepts for final projects.

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments
September 29	Organizing and Accessing the Record - A Historical Approach <i>Reading:</i> Vannevar Bush, <i>As we May Think</i> , in: The Atlantic Monthly, 7 (1945), online version <i>Activity:</i> Selection of final projects, formation of project groups
Week 5 October 4	Visualizing Controversial History - New Design Approaches to Political Archives Guest Speaker: John Tirman, Center for International Studies, MIT <i>Readings:</i> Valerie Johnson, <i>Dealing with the silence</i> , in: D. Thomas, S. Fowler, V. Johnson "The Silence of the Archive", London, Facet, 2017, pp. 101-116
October 6	<i>Readings:</i> Lawrence Liang, <i>The Dominant, The Residual and the Emergent In Archival Imagination</i> , in: Spheres, Journal for Digital Cultures (2-2015), pp. 1-14 and response by Robert Rapoport (Graduate Students) <i>Assignment:</i> First presentation of Final Project Ideas
Week 6 October 11	No class - Indigenous Peoples Day (formerly: Columbus Day)
October 13	Digital Archives and the Crowd <i>Readings:</i> Trevor Owens, <i>Digital Cultural Heritage and the Crowd</i> , in: Curator, 56 (1) 2013, pp. 121-130 <i>Assignment:</i> Presentation and discussion of revised final project concepts, technologies, and designs
Week 7 October 18	Final Project Work Session (no regular class session) <i>Readings:</i> Excerpts from Ellen Lupton, <i>Design Is Storytelling</i> (New York, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2017) <i>Assignment:</i> Watch Carles Sora: <i>Art, Archives, Storytelling</i> ; Develop Storytelling concepts for final projects, work on updates, including first designs.
October 20	Re-Writing History: Historical Administrative Archives (class via Zoom) Guest Speaker: Jan Vondráček, Masaryk Institute and Archive, Prague Jennifer Douglas, Allison Mills, <i>From the Sidelines to the Center: Reconsidering the Potential of the Personal in Archives</i> , in: Archival Science, 3-2018, 257-277
Week 8 October 25	Community Archives <i>Readings:</i> Andrew Flinn: <i>Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges</i> , in: Journal of the Society of Archivists Vol. 28, No. 2, October 2007, 151 – 176 Grad students: Mary Stevens, <i>New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on</i> , in: International Journal of Heritage Studies <i>Assignment:</i> Experimentation with visual display of complex archival content; presentation and discussion of final project updates
October 27	Art and Archives: Archiving the Arab Spring Guest Speaker: Lara Baladi, Art, Culture, Technology, MIT (TBD) <i>Readings:</i> Katie Shilton, Ramesh Srinivasan, <i>Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections</i> , in: Archivaria, Spring 2007, 87-101
Week 9 November 1	Fan Archives <i>Readings:</i> Jez Collins, Oliver Carter, <i>"They're Not Pirates, They're Archivists": The Role of Fans as Curators and Archivists of Popular Music Heritage</i> , in: <i>Preserving Popular Music Heritage</i> (New York, Routledge, 2015) Graduate Students: Simon Popple, Daniel H. Mutibwa and Andrew Prescott, <i>Community archives and the creation of living knowledge</i> , in: Communities, Archives and New Collaborative Practices, Policy Press, 2020, pp. 1-18 <i>Assignment:</i> Revision of UI and UX concepts of final projects

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments
November 3	Activist Archives <i>Readings:</i> Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, Helen Partridge, <i>Archivist as activist: lessons from three queer community archives in California</i> , in: Arch Sci (2013) 13:293–316
Week 10 November 8	Stories, Activism, and Music: Documenting Protest <i>Readings:</i> Alison Martin, Black Music Matters: Affirmation and Resilience in African American Musical Spaces in Washington, DC, in: Fernando Orejuela, Stephanie Shonekan (eds.), Black Lives Matter & Music. Protest, Intervention, Reflection, Indiana University Press, 2018, pp. 70-85 <i>Assignment:</i> Review of design concepts and project deliverables
November 10	Community Engagement in Archival Work <i>Readings:</i> Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, Elizabeth Shepherd: <i>New frameworks for community engagement in the archive sector: from handing over to handing on</i> , in: International Journal of Heritage Studies, Vol. 16, Nos. 1–2, January–March 2010, 59–76
Week 11 November 15	Community Archives (cont.) & Final Project Work <i>Readings:</i> Michelle Caswell, <i>Affective bonds: what community archives can teach mainstream institutions</i> , in: Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn (eds.), Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, memory and identity, Facet, London, 2020, pp. 21-40 <i>Assignment:</i> Discussion and revision of final projects, review with museum/archive counterparts
November 17	Final Project Work <i>Assignment:</i> Review of Final projects, including beta versions of online archive designs, blog posts
Week 12 November 22	Interface Design for Cultural Heritage <i>Readings:</i> Ruecker, Stan, Radzikowska, Milena, Sinclair, Stéfan, Introduction to: Visual Interface Design for Digital Cultural Heritage A Guide to Rich-Prospect Browsing, Rutledge, 2011, pp. 1-28
November 24	Final Project Work <i>Assignment:</i> Review of Final projects, including beta versions of online archive designs, blog posts
Week 13 November 29	Final Project Work <i>Assignment:</i> Project updates
December 1	Final Project Work <i>Assignment:</i> Project updates
Week 14 December 6	Final Project Work <i>Assignment:</i> Second Review of Final projects, dry run of project presentations, draft of design paper
December 8	Final Project Presentations (Public)