

# The Dangers of Disappearance, the Opportunities of Recovery

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## Abstract

This essay considers two archives and their traces: the Banff New Media Institute (BNMI) and the Daniel Langlois Foundation (DLF). Both archives are the product of transitory but significant initiatives in the media arts and digital media context. Both suffered unanticipated project endings due to institutional and human agency and are now in varying stages of recovery and rediscovery. A third personal artistic, cultural, and social history collection – the Sara Diamond Fonds at VIVO Media Art Centre's Crista Dahl Library and Archive – seeks lessons from the endings of those first two archives; administrators of this third archive have developed a dynamic partnership strategy to prevent the same issues that resulted in the disappearance of the BNMI and DLF archives.<sup>[1]</sup> In the instances of the BNMI and DLF, disappearance has meant the removal from public access. Disappearance has a second meaning in the context of digital media whether online or platform (such as CDs, DVDs)

This essay considers two archives and their traces: the Banff New Media Institute (BNMI) and the Daniel Langlois Foundation (DLF). Both archives are the product of transitory but significant initiatives in the media arts and digital media context. Both suffered unanticipated project endings due to institutional and human agency and are now in varying stages of recovery and rediscovery. A third personal artistic, cultural, and social history collection – the Sara Diamond Fonds – seeks lessons from the endings of those first two archives; administrators of this third archive at the Christa Dahl Media Library and Archives and Simon Fraser University have developed a dynamic partnership strategy to prevent the same issues that resulted in the disappearance of the BNMI and DLF archives.<sup>[1]</sup> In the instances of the BNMI and DLF, disappearance has meant the removal from public access. Disappearance has a second meaning in the context of digital media whether online or platform (such as CDs, DVDs). As Grau, Hoth, and Wandl-Vogt (2019) stress: "Due to lack of institutional support and rapid changes in storage and presentation media, works that originated ten years ago can no longer be recovered technically for exhibition or preservation purposes" [Grau, Hoth, Wandl-Vogt 2019, 20]. Giselle Beiguelman further asks, "How to deal in the field of preservation and conservation with files that disappear, works that stop functioning, services that vanish from one day to the next [Beiguelman 2019, 118]? Media art works and Internet art rely on connections to databases, links, and third-party servers and services. Moreover, many works are interactive and contributor-driven so there is no easy beginning and end and often exist in many versions. Both interpretations of disappearance address the challenge that, as Sue Breakell suggests, "the records do not simply go through a life cycle from creation and currency through to interactivity and the archive but move in and out of currency" [Breakell 2008, 4]. This is in part an argument to sustain institutional archives that mark a specific time period and to exert best practices such as emulation in preserving digital materials and licensing to allow the use of copyrighted materials. It is also an argument for the creators of collections, whether inside institutions (BNMI), or as alternative archives (DLF, CDMLA), to negotiate clear accessioning and deaccessioning relationships with their own institution (The Banff Centre) or potential partner institutions (DLF, CDMLA) early in the process of creating or acquiring an archive, or as soon as there is a perceived sense of the significance of that collection, whether within the institution and/or the stakeholders that it serves.

The period of the late 1990s through the early twenty-first century was one of intense interest in archives on the part of institutions, governments, curators, and artists, and coincides with the creation of the BNMI and the DLF documentation centre. The "allure" of the archive, as Sue Breakell (2015) notes, was sparked by a heightened engagement with memory and the emergence of memory technologies (such as databases, hard drives, and centralized server storage). The drive to digitize meant that some records would be left behind, fueling concerns about inclusion, and about who should have the right to choose which materials would be digitized. The massive production of online materials seemed to some to be a gift towards a universal human memory; to others, "the more absolute knowledge on the Internet becomes, the harder it is to comprehend as it [knowledge] transforms into an unreadable amount of data" [Hoth 2021].

Post-modernism challenged the authoritative nature of historical records and archives, in part instigated by Michel Foucault's (1969) analysis of archives as a demonstration of relationships and institutions in process, perpetually incomplete repositories that represent power, through what is present and absent in their contents. Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, argues for the political nature of the archive, observing that power resides in control over its content and access. Anticipating the rise of the Internet and digital preservation, he astutely described a contemporary obsession with archives and the desire to preserve. He painted a tension between the public domain and personal memory materials that plays out today,

for example, in debates about the right to be forgotten,<sup>[2]</sup> or the ways that social media intermingle personal and institutional commentary and politics, or the growing interface between personal health data collection and medical records. In *An Archival Impulse* (2004), Hal Foster recognizes the archival turn and analyzes three kinds of artists' works: those that use archival content, those where the artist performs methods drawn from archival practices, and those in which artists create unique archives. Powerful works have occurred when archivists invite artists into collections to create new interpretations. The Artist-in-Residency Program at the City of Portland Archives and Record Centre supported Portland Archives artists-in-residence Garrick Imatini and Kaia Sand. They interviewed selected subjects who were documented in the city's Police Bureau's surveillance fonds of 576 activists, augmenting the police fonds with "lives embedded, yet silenced, in the records", resulting in a new understanding of that history and the expungement of criminal records [Carbone 2015, 51]. Antonio Muntadas' *The File Room* is at the same time both an emulation and critique of archival practices and an archive in its own right. It is a project intentionally without an ending, a travelling installation of physical archival files and a connected and collectively created and ongoing database of instances of censorship—political, cultural, and scientific.<sup>[3]</sup> The historical context provides a framework for motivations and activities at the core of the three case studies that follow.

Archives and archivists have various standards to guide them in considering which collections to acquire, the methods of accessioning collections and conditions to deaccession collections. The Canadian Council of Archives (CCA, 2018) describes accessioning as, "... the physical and legal addition of predominantly unpublished documentary material to an archival repository's holdings. It follows an archival appraisal decision identifying the records as having enduring value in relation to the acquisition mandate and policies of the repository."<sup>[4]</sup> The Society of American Archivists (SAS) provides terms, process and considerations for deaccessioning [Society of American Archivists 2017]. Deaccessioning represents the removal of materials from an archive and is perceived by most archives to be a component of best practices, but it is understandably controversial. SAS argues that policy and guidelines are needed, with clear options for the materials deaccessioned. Decisions should be made by archivists, the archive, and its home institution. Processes need to be transparent, properly documented, and overseen in an ethical manner. The SAS suggests that deeds of gift should include clear deaccessioning terms. Reasons for deaccessioning materials include reappraisal of a collection's relevance to institutional mandate, frequency of use, its potential research value, whether it would be more meaningful and better used in a different repository, its condition, and maintenance costs. Other considerations include the ability to define provenance, or legal requirements to retain documents over time periods. Archives ideally seek a transfer of fonds to a different repository. They may return materials to original owners, or they may sell the collection or, ultimately, destroy the records. These routes are relevant for the case studies considered below.

Also relevant are increased options in collections management and permissions, given the rise of digitization and the acquisition of creative media works. The British Archive for Contemporary Writing has adopted two complementary practices, the creation of a "storehouse" and a "collection." The first is the short-term loan of writers' archives to support thematic archival research, for example for six months rather than the 20 years minimum required by most archives [Whibley, Sara 2019]. The goal is that emerging writers will see BACW as a trusted agent, and that writers will provide their archives to the collection as their careers mature [University of East Anglia 2022]. Licensing is an alternative to "deposit" as it allows multiple institutions to hold digital materials and retains the originator's copyright. For example, with a deposit license, such as that of the Oxford University Research Archive (ORA, 2014), the intellectual property creator retains their rights and can continue to license it and earn revenue and agrees to grant the University a non-exclusive, sub-licensable, worldwide license to store and access the work to the public.

The last decades have witnessed continued dialogue within the archival community and between communities and archivists that shift archival best practices in relation to Indigenous records and records of other vulnerable groups. This includes repatriation, or repatriating holdings to Indigenous groups at their request, or the renegotiation of ownership and access with Indigenous peoples for archives remaining in collections. Call 70 of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission requires the inclusion of Indigenous recordkeepers and researchers, their perspectives, and their methodologies within the Canadian archival system. Critical archival studies foster archival practices that resist reinforcing oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Instead, the goal is to develop inclusive, accessible, multivocal sites for cultural participation and dissemination [Caswell & Cifor 2019].

## The Case Studies

### The Banff New Media Institute

The Banff New Media Institute (BNMI) ran from 1995 to 2010 at The Banff Centre (TBC) in Alberta, Canada, on the heels of the centre's early history of virtual reality and new media research. It was an international think tank on the present and future practices of new media, with leaders engaged in developing the science and technologies, creative and design practices, jurisprudence, business models, and theories; it was also a training hub and business incubator, with three research labs and a co-production program. BNMI staff curated exhibitions and events both at the Walter Phillips Gallery on site and abroad.<sup>[5]</sup> Over the course of its first ten years, it held over 150 summits, symposia, workshops, conferences, and events which were recorded (audio) and from which relevant records such as release forms, agendas, analysis of events, and other memorabilia were kept. Co-productions were described and catalogued, and the documentation made available on-line, as were exhibition

descriptions and documentation. The BNMI created Horizonzero.ca, a Heritage Canada funded experimental online gallery and site for discourse regarding the new media world which acted as a guide back to the summits and co-productions.

The BNMI team were attentive to gender imbalance in the growth of the new media industry, the presence of female identified creative practitioners and their lack of inclusion in festivals, and the burgeoning of a diverse global creative new media community. As much as possible there was mitigation against digital exclusion, accepting George Gerbner's concept of "symbolic annihilation," where absence from the historical record removes practices and voices that could shape the future, a concept applied to archives by Caswell [Caswell, Cifor & Ramirez 2016] [Caswell 2014].<sup>[6]</sup> A feature of BNMI was its deep commitment to Indigenous creators and technical leaders, whose creative practices and self-governed events were supported by BNMI (such as *Drum Beat to Drum Byte*., two gatherings regarding Indigenous practices and presence on the Internet that were two decades apart). Indigenous artists, technicians, theorists, curators, and elders engaged in all manner of BNMI activities. BNMI also built collaborations with local Indigenous communities.<sup>[7]</sup> Despite its government and industry funding the BNMI fearlessly hosted agonistic debates over video game sexism, algorithmic bias, anthropocentric notions of intelligence, open-source vs copyright, bioengineering and environment, and other controversial topics.<sup>[8]</sup>

In synch with Foucault, Derrida, and Foster's calls to reexamine the archives, the BNMI held summits and workshops that considered the transition to digital archives; events debated memory and history, the archive versus the database and their ultimate integration, and the question of what should be digitized and how it should be conserved, with titles such as "Media, Material and Culture: Communicating Canada's Heritage". "Unforgiving Memory". and "ReFresh". (which have become the biannual Media Art History conferences).<sup>[9]</sup> These strengthened the accelerating "archive fever" within the BNMI and the belief that it must leave a record of this complex era. That intuition is rewarded today as the BNMI fonds include documentation of prescient debates that are in contemporary reprise (such as the nature of social media, gender, and race bias in AI systems, the mapping potential of GPS/GIS technologies, or control over data), and engage deeply diverse actors regarding technologies, systems, tools, and creative expressions that have shaped our lives today.<sup>[10]</sup>

For the archive project, a decade of audio recordings and documents were digitized and brought up to 2005 standards and a physical archive and finding aid were created by a professional archivist seconded from the National Archives Canada. There was an online interface which was searchable by events, names, and dates, and it was easily accessed on TBC's website, as was the co-production catalogue. The BNMI team felt a contractual, financial, and emotional connection to the fonds. We had raised a significant amount of public funding to build this collection and create a related book. Speakers had signed release forms and expected that the associated materials would be present on the BNMI web site. The same contractual and affective bonds were not shared across The Banff Centre. In 2005 the BNMI team hoped that the fonds could reside with the Paul Fleck Library and Archive at the Banff Centre, but the Archive had no interest in the physical or digital archive nor did the archivist at that time recognize value in placing the BNMI fonds online.<sup>[11]</sup> I left TBC in 2005; Susan Kennard, then Director of the BNMI, left in 2010; and TBC closed the BNMI shortly afterwards. The digital archive persisted, available on the main web site, and was well used. Dr. Sarah Cook and I co-edited the book *Euphoria and Dystopia: The Banff New Media Institute Dialogues* and it was published in 2011 by TBC and University of Waterloo's Riverside Press.<sup>[12]</sup> The e-book version in 2013 was meticulously linked to the online archive as a thematic, discursive, and critical finding aid. The BNMI efforts represented a strategy for archival access comprising multiple interpretive publications (the e-book and Horizonzero.ca) linked to a digital archive. This approach is appropriate for reinvigorating archives, introducing fonds to new audiences, and making them available for creative interpretation by artists and new generations of scholars.

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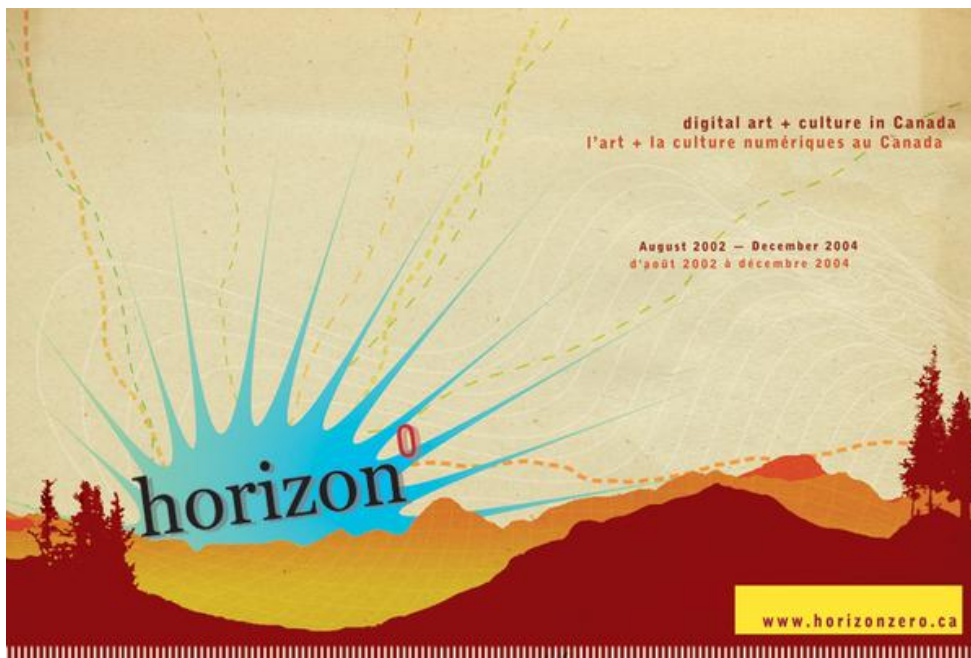
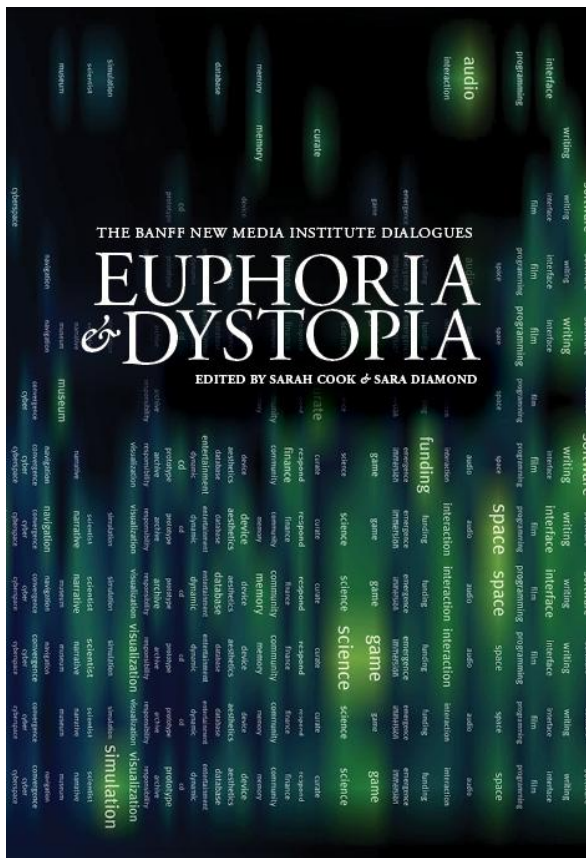


Figure 1. Euphoria & Dystopia and Horizonzero.ca DVDs – physical traces of digital archives

## Euphoria & Dystopia and Horizonzero.ca DVDs – physical traces of digital archives

In 2016 Indigenous artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle found that the archive was no longer accessible and sounded an alert. Indeed, it had been removed after a change of leadership and a web rebranding and would never return to its original online form, thus severing all the meticulous links made to several thousand digital records and to the digital archives from other publications. Two years later, The Banff Centre did not renew the HorizonZero.ca domain or pay the small fee for hosting, so this legacy of the BNMI also disappeared.

Contributors to the archive – most poignantly Indigenous artists and historians – along with other scholars and archivists, the book publisher Philip Beesley, Sarah Cook, and I appealed to The Banff Centre to return the archive to researchers and the public again through a digital interface and volunteered to find or contribute funding. In 2018 TBC's archivist John Yolkowski

stepped in and moved the project from an IT-led web site initiative to an archive-led initiative. The physical fonds moved to the Paul Fleck Library and Archives and were accessioned. Work began and a number of documents were made available on the TBC's archive site and mirrored on Alberta on Record.<sup>[13]</sup> Then Yolkowski left. Indigenous artists and media historians insisted that the Indigenous media arts history be reconstructed, as TBC was an epicenter of Indigenous and international media production, new media, and digital arts creativity. The Banff Centre acted on this in 2021 and hired a team of researchers to undertake an oral history of Indigenous media art at TBC, which is now completed. These efforts underscore the responsibility (Bergis, 2016) that institutions bear in relation to their engagement with Indigenous and other equity seeking communities if they collect and represent their data.

Perhaps The Banff Centre leadership perceived the BNMI archive as the expression of a specific leadership and their program priorities, not as an archive. While many institutions do retain program records, they are rarely featured as part of a current marketing web site. There was no continuity in Banff's Indigenous leadership, and hence no awareness of the archive's Indigenous contents or advocate. Institutional memory is fragile at best; however, the formal nature of an archive and the policies surrounding it can create some ballast. The collection represented consciously collected and ordered institutional records, but it was not an archive – in this period it was not yet appraised or perceived as having “enduring” institutional value and hence formally accessioned. Rather, it was a counter archive within an institution. TBC has a deaccessioning policy in place for its visual art collection, and its Paul Fleck Library and Archives holdings, but the BNMI archive, treated as an orphan record of program contents, was not covered under this policy.

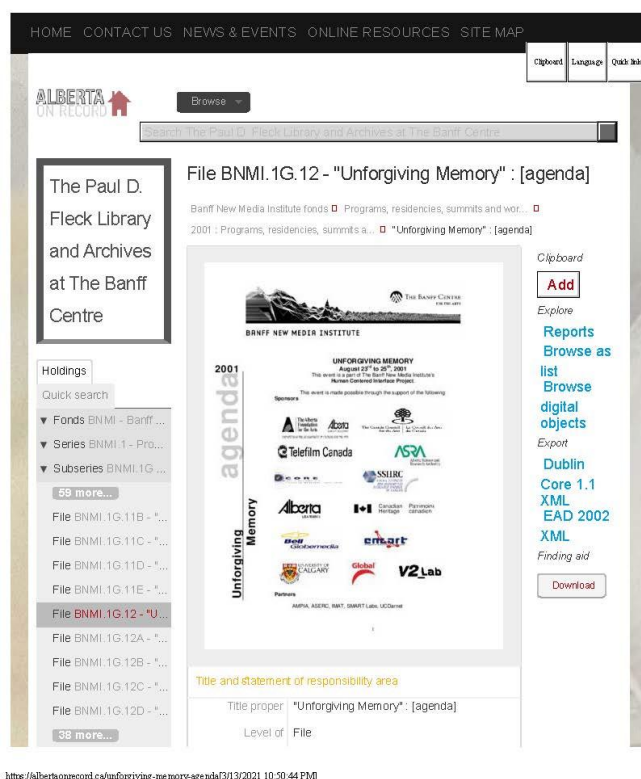
It is valuable, nonetheless, to consider the principles of deaccessioning in collections management as defined by the SAS (2017). Richard Gerrard (2013) in his instructional text on deaccessioning lays out the rigorous staged nature of removing collections: due diligence institutional governance processes are required. The driver should be to improve the collection, and the goal of disposal to find a new home more able to house a collection. Writing on “Archival Appraisal and Deaccessioning” in *Indigitization: Tools for Digitizing and Sustaining Indigenous Knowledge* (2020), Kayla Lar-son says of deaccessioning that materials should be returned to the original donors or holders of a collection. This principle is relevant for HorizonZero.ca as the “tell” issue included a reversioning of the Elderspeak website of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council with their permission as they could no longer host the original Elderspeak collection of stories. The issue was edited by Cheryl L'Hirondelle who undertook that reversioning. With the end of Horizonzero.ca, an unforeseen consequence was that MLTC lost access to Elderspeak although it is present on the Internet Archive.<sup>[14]</sup> With L'Hirondelle's support, MLTC will work with the DVD version and L'Hirondelle's original files to repatriate the files and recreate the site.

A formal agreement should have been put in place for the care and transition of the BNMI records and the maintenance of HorizonZero, or for its disciplined disposal to another identified archive. As its creators, we should have built in redundancy and distributed the responsibility for maintenance while we were still working at TBC (Endings Symposium chat 14:08:32), and possibly created a fund to upgrade and support the fonds. In the Q. and A. of my presentation at the Project Endings conference, Martin Holmes urged “archives, mirrors, repos, web servers, Internet Archive — make as many copies as possible.” We should have arranged for a second repository. Alternatively, The Banff Centre could have returned the BNMI archive to Cook, Diamond, and Beesley and enabled them to find a home, as several institutions stepped up to offer to take it — but even that would have required staff effort and institutional prioritization.<sup>[15]</sup> The physical and some digital archives are available on site to researchers who travel to The Banff Centre. In 2022 Jessica Zimmerman, the new archivist of the Paul Fleck Archive, reached out with a commitment to “find a home for the BNMI story,” integrating it into The Banff Centre's history and timeline and revitalizing its online presence, including its audio recordings and previous archival interface. Banff is initiating this process and I will collaborate with the archives to seek funds for these endeavors. They may redescribe material into AtoM<sup>[16]</sup> to afford greater public accessibility and retrieval options and create a Rules for Archival Description (RAD) standard-compliant finding aid for easier access for distance researchers.<sup>[17]</sup> Demand for access to the archive has grown and The Banff Centre seeks to revitalize its digital programs and celebrate its fifty years of work with Indigenous communities. The collection now fits CCA's criteria for accessioning (2018). This plan would mean that the BNMI's role and impact will be visible to the current generation of scholars, artists, and researchers, heralding a happy ending.

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**Figure 2.** *Unforgiving Memory* summit event agenda - Alberta on Record provides access to several BNMI documents digitized in 2018.

## Daniel Langlois Foundation Documentation Centre

The second case study underscores the importance of establishing a back-up repository. The Daniel Langlois Foundation Centre for Research and Documentation was initiated in 1998 by Jean Gagnon with the support of Daniel Langlois, the co-founder of Softimage.<sup>[18]</sup> It became an important repository for the new media art works funded by the foundation and an expanded place to collect archives from artists, institutions and events that represented the history of media arts.<sup>[19]</sup> Langlois renovated the Ex-Centris buildings which included theatres, gathering spaces, and a home for the documentation centre's materials, with offices for visiting researchers. The DLF bought collections including those of stellar video artists the Vasulkas, and EAT, Experimental Art and Technology — the 9 EVENINGS OF THEATRE AND ENGINEERING, an exhibition that heralded the opening of an American epoch of art and science collaboration. A robust web presence accompanied the centre, allowing users to identify artists and projects. In 2005, the Documentation and Conservation of Media Arts Heritage (DOCAM) network, led by Alain de Pacard, was spearheaded by DLF, and comprised 20 institutions, from universities, to the prestigious new media journal *Leonardo*, to digital media centres and museums, with funding from SSHRC. It sought to create standards for the documentation, exhibition, and archiving of new media art works. DOCAM and the Education Centre invited artists, curators, and historians into this rich collection through a series of residencies. For example, in her residency, Dr. Caroline Langill produced *Shifting Polarities: Proposing a Canon of Canadian Electronic Media Art, 1970-1990* (2006), an influential treatise that made the case that the contemporary art canon must expand to integrate new media art.<sup>[20]</sup>

Over time Langlois' attention drifted. His investments were not flourishing, and the cinemas at Ex-Centris were bleeding \$2 million/year. By 2006, concerned about the sustainability of the documentation centre, Gagnon began approaching DOCAM members as well as the La Cinémathèque québécoise to take the centre's holdings and turn them into an archive. Acquisition contracts stipulated that the Foundation was legally responsible to find a not-for-profit home if it stopped functioning. Gagnon left in 2008. Langlois was hard hit by the 2008 financial crash. Access to the documentation centre ended with the collection boxed up and stored. International scholars and donors alike began to pressure the DLF to find a home for the collection. Ultimately, contractual obligations with individuals or agents who had donated their records, user activism, and the commitment of an individual, Jean Gagnon, resulted in a safe landing for this valuable archive. This transfer represents a deaccessioning best practice as defined by the SAS (2017).

La Cinémathèque québécoise accepted the fonds as the director Pierre Renault was interested in new media. Gagnon moved to the CQ as head of collections in 2010. He immediately began negotiations with the DLF, and secured a grant of \$75,000 to move and update the finding aid and web site; the collection formally moved on October 11, 2011. No further acquisitions

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would occur, hence avoiding a debate about whether CQ should begin to acquire new media art works which could have halted the transfer of the collection. The DLF collection remains one of CQ's most popular archives, with valuable holdings like the records of 1960s Xerox artist Sonia Sheridan.<sup>[21]</sup>

The DLF site also leads to the DOCAM project web site.<sup>[22]</sup> DOCAM research identified and investigated five axes that distinguish methodologies and tools needed to address the preservation and technological documentation of electronic works of art, relevant to all archives, museums, libraries, and other collecting agencies managing new media and digital arts collections: "conservation, documentation, cataloguing, history of technologies and terminology." DOCAM includes case studies conducted with museum partners.<sup>[23]</sup> The association of the DOCAM and DLF sites is valuable because DOCAM provides a contextual understanding of the works in the collection as well as wisdom for current archives that collect physical, online, or post-Internet art (online with physical expression). Langlois recently subsidized the conversion of elements of the collection through emulation, including works with online links from Flash to HTML5 as many artists' websites and related CD-ROM and DVD projects were built in Flash in the early 2000s. Although proprietary, Flash provided highly malleable graphic design tools. This is a positive example of the archive's originator in concert with the current archive taking responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the fonds.

When asked if he regretted the path that he took to create a media arts documentation centre, Gagnon indicated his belief that there was no other route available at the time. He had just left his role as Media Arts curator at the National Gallery of Canada and there was no capacity or interest there.<sup>[24]</sup> He is concerned that CQ remains dependent on him for deep knowledge of the archive because there is no time or resources there to train another expert.

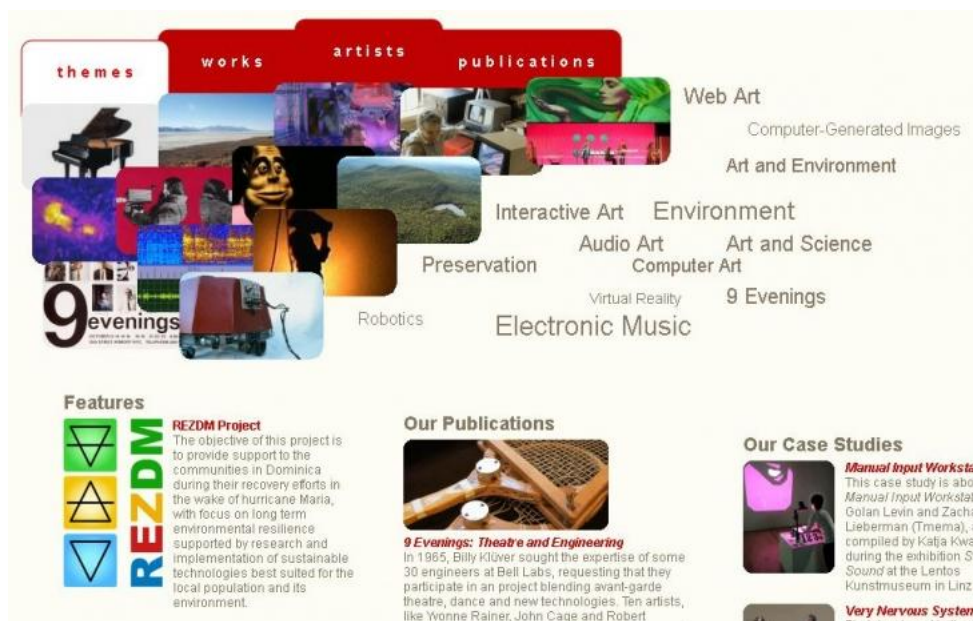


Figure 3. Sub-navigation through La Cinémathèque québécoise to Daniel Langlois Foundation documentation centre interface, 2021

## Sara Diamond Fonds, Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive

The Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive (CDMLA) is housed within the VIVO Media Arts Centre and holds a significant repository of 8000 items, including video art, documentary, experimental documentary, narrative, synaesthetic, animation, and event documentation videotapes by artists and independent producers. The collections represent sixty years of production, an extensive archive of publications from the video and media art world and documentation of events, exhibitions, organizations, social movements, government policies, as well as the history of VIVO, founded in 1973. Over the last decade it has expanded its efforts to create fifteen special collections, as well as nine major fonds and five minor fonds. The CDMLA fonds align with Foster's description of artists' engagement with archives. The CDMLA has developed finding aids and projects including exhibitions built from the collections and fonds with artists' residencies to reinterpret contents. They have raised funds to digitize aspects of the archive and provide effective navigation interfaces. In 2016-17, VIVO approached me to donate my materials to them from my earlier life as an artist, activist, and academic. I was the board president and an artist and curator there for many years.

My archive, built over the last four years, holds multiple sub-collections: the Women's Labour History Project; my personal video art and new media works including the extensive [www.codezebra.ca](http://www.codezebra.ca) Post-Internet art project which itself consists of software, a website, performances, wearable art, and artifacts;<sup>[25]</sup> Amelia Productions, a five-person feminist collective (1980–1982) of which I was a member; and documents regarding international solidarity, Indigenous rights, feminism, LGBTQ2+,

anti-censorship activities, labour activism, and curriculum development. The experimental documentaries of the Women's Labour History Project and its photographic and print exhibitions relied heavily on film, television, photographic, and institutional archives in Canada and British Columbia — hence components of this collection are archives of archives, acting as a means of understanding what was collected and what was absent. The oral histories in the archive compensated for the sparse records regarding women workers available in archives. The art works are available on the site under a licensing agreement [Oxford Research Archives 2014].

Archivist Karen Knights has created a permanent online exhibition Women and West Coast Labour: Eighty years of action for equity in domestic and workplace labour by women in B.C.<sup>[26]</sup> featuring two sub-exhibitions. One on women's activism holds Chambermaids and Whistlepunks 1900–1970, featuring oral histories of labor organization from the Women's Labour History Project, and the fonds of Amelia Productions. A second exhibition, Working Women in Focus 1970–1980, presents the fonds of the Women in Focus feminist artist-run production, distribution, and exhibition centre.

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Figure 4. Women's Labour History Project fonds launch page, Crista Dahl Library and Archives

As with Jean Gagnon and the DLF, VIVO relies on one person, Karen Knights, who is the current driving force behind the media archive, just as it relied on Crista Dahl for the print and print materials archive. I moved forward with the donation with the stipulation that we bring Simon Fraser University into the project as a formal partner, acting on lessons learned from the BNMI and DLF archives. Copies of my Women's Labour History Project audio collection reside in the Royal British Columbia Museum archives, which were the first repository, and the SFU archive, where I am an alumna and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate. SFU has made a contractual commitment to acquire my collection should VIVO need to deaccession it. The responsibility for the digitization, maintenance, and dissemination of this fonds is shared between the archive (CDMLA), SFU, and me, the living donor. While there are currently affective ties to the collection on the part of VIVO, SFU, and me, the former could wane with generational change. We have curated a partnership to create an ecosystem that will link my fonds at VIVO with nine other relevant collections and interested organizations and research centres.<sup>[27]</sup> Partners will gain by examining the histories and methodologies that shaped their institutions and fonds and by making connections between historical and contemporary actors including originating communities and individuals to explore reinterpretation and redescription.

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Our methods to develop the bridge are highly collaborative and include participatory design [Simonsen & Robertson 2013] incorporating Sabharwal's concept of "socialized digital curation" (2021); visualization [Harris & Harris 2019] [Bahde 2017]; and research-creation (2014) in a case study approach. We will undertake workshops to create the specification for the ecosystem and develop microsites that foreshadow the design. Metadata, annotation, and social media tagging tools [Fatona 2021] [Allison-Cassin 2020] will be applied through metadata and redescription workshops with Indigenous, Black, and other community groups. Artist-in-the-archives and researcher workshops will encourage exploration, discovery, application,

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integration, and dissemination of archival contents. We will sketch visualizations that show relationships between fonds and metadata. A series of historical case studies by Dr. Andrea Fatona, Dana Claxton and Dr. Karrmen Crey, Karen Knights, and me will include research, curation, and/or artmaking.

## Conclusions

Perhaps institutions, creators of archives, and their users all bear responsibility for the protection and continuity of archives. Individuals have affective ties to the artists and archives that house their work and that they have built, but it is not viable to rely only on a few knowledgeable and emotionally-attached individuals. Collections within institutions, alternative archives, and significant fonds would benefit from strategies and contracts that address deaccessioning and alternative repositories. Temporary forms of accessioning such as the storehouse may serve to test interest in a collection before its donation. Where possible, donor commitments to raise dollars for maintenance and dissemination in partnership with archives are beneficial but should not lead to excluding the acquisition of fonds from marginalized groups. Institutions need to address duty of care for fonds representing Indigenous knowledge and history. Knowledge dissemination that creates new interest and new proponents for an archive including its recovery and rereading is both an individual and an institutional responsibility. Dr. Jennifer Kennedy from Queen's University serves as an example — she is exploring the BNMI archives to understand contemporary feminist practices in new media that were sparked through encounters at the BNMI events and its co-productions and became a strong advocate for its revitalization (2021). The partnership between VIVO, other archives, and community organizations and underrepresented groups should stimulate ongoing interpretation of my fonds. And the renewal of the BNMI's Indigenous media archive through oral histories is testimony to effective user activism.

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## Notes

[1] The BNMI archive does not contain complex interactive new media art works. The Langlois Collection includes documentation of video, web, CD, and interactive works but few are online. My collection includes video and web works. New Media archiving is demanding because of changing platforms - many works have found a home with the Archives of Digital Art (ADA) and Rhizome, discussed later in this essay.

[2] This is the argument that an individual should be able to have their records removed from social media and other Internet sites.

[3] It opened in 1994 and the database was hosted over the years at several sites, eventually migrating to Rhizome (a digital arts archive) who upgraded and restored it for exhibition in 2016 at its affiliate the New Museum and online presence

[4] The CCA's National Archival Accession Standard Working Group (NAASWG) wrote a content standard for archival accession information which governs metadata standards, information sharing, research within and across archives, and management of digital archives. See [http://archivescanada.ca/CWG\\_AccessionStandard](http://archivescanada.ca/CWG_AccessionStandard).

[5] To see the breadth of the events and participants explore <https://livingarchitecturesystems.com/publication/euphoria-dystopia/>.

[6] For example, the sequential events Bridges (co-created with Celia Pearce from the University of Southern California), Bridges 2, and Skinning Our Tools bear testimony to the ways that the BNMI insisted on bringing discussions of race and Indigenous identity to art, science, and technology tables.

[7] Jules Bergis (2016) underscores the danger that digital archives in particular, because of technical and programming needs will exclude traditionally marginalized groups.

[8] The BNMI was funded by the Canadian Tri-council research agencies, Alberta research, Telefilm Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, Heritage and Industry Canada, international councils, and Canadian and international industry.

[9] <https://www.mediaarthistory.org/mah-conf-series>.

[10] These include machine learning, genomics, neuroscience, nanotechnology, Artificial General Intelligence, social media, blogs, mobile devices and their affordances, Augmented and Virtual Reality, open source, streaming, and digital currencies.

[11] This memory was provided by Susan Kennard, who was the Director of the BNMI from 2005 – 2010.

[12] It included essays reflecting on the activities and themes of the BNMI, transcripts from the BNMI archives, information on attendees, and a visualization of BNMI activities. A DVD documenting [horizonzero.ca](http://horizonzero.ca) was bundled with the book. The full version is available here: <https://livingarchitecturesystems.com/publication/euphoria-dystopia/>.

[13] <https://albertaonrecord.ca/banff-new-media-institute>.

[14] <https://web.archive.org/web/20160316203351/http://www.horizonzero.ca/elderspeak/index.html>.

[15] In another example, the leadership of Toronto's Design Exchange brought back the original curator of its collection for the sole purpose of finding it a new home; they followed Canadian Museum Association standards and it now resides with the ROM and the Canadian Museum of History.

[16] "AtoM stands for Access to Memory. It is a web-based, open source application for standards-based archival description and access in a multilingual, multi-repository environment" (<https://www.accessmemory.org/en/>).

[17] AtoM (Access to Memory) provides the following definition of an archival description, "Archival description is a body of information about an archival record or records. The descriptions provide contextual information about the archival materials and are arranged into hierarchical levels (fonds, series, files, items, and variations of these in accordance with institutional standards)." <https://www.accessmemory.org/en/docs/2.3/user-manual/add-edit-content/archival-descriptions/#archival-descriptions>.

[18] Jean Gagnon provided details of the motivation for these initiatives and the transition process in an interview with me in March of 2021.

[19] The collection grew to comprise 2691 video works or source documents, DVDs, documentary works and documentation of art works, 2084 files of artists, festivals, biennales, 764 audio documents, documentation, and CD-ROMs by artists. From 2000 to 2005 the Centre acquired 6,000 books.

[20] <https://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=742>.

[21] Xerox is used here to denote that Sheridan used Xerox processes rather than that she was a Xerox employee.

[22] <https://www.docam.ca/index-2.html>.

[23] Partners are the National Gallery of Canada, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and Canadian Centre for Architecture including artists such as Janet Cardiff, Stan Douglas, Gary Hill, Nam June Paik, David Rokeby, Greg Lynn, and Bill Viola. Resources include a *Preservation Guide for Technology-Based Artwork*; a *Cataloguing Guide for New Media Collection*; a *Documentary Mode* adapted to media arts; *DOCAM Glossary*, a bilingual terminological tool; and a *Technological Timeline*, which includes both media artworks and technological components.

[24] After Jean Gagnon left, the NGC terminated the role of media arts curator.

[25] CodeZebra was emulated from Flash onto the HTML5 platform, maintaining the initial quality of its integrated web sites which began in 1997 and continued until 2004. Unfortunately, several of the servers where the original games and software resided are no longer connected and reconstructing the links from the last version of the software to the site is a project requiring future efforts.

[26] <http://www.vivomediaarts.com/archive/women-and-west-coast-labour/>.

[27] The partnership is comprised of OCAD University's Centre for the Study of the Black Canadian Diaspora (CBCD) and Visual Analytics Laboratory (VAL), Simon Fraser University Archives (SFUA) and SFU Library Special Collections and Rare Books (SCRB), City of Vancouver Archives (CVA), The Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM), the BC Labour Heritage Centre (BCLHC), BLAK, a Black artists' centre in Surrey, B.C., and Satellite Video Exchange Society's VIVO Media Arts Centre programming committee and Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive (CDMLA).

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