Life Captured, Gratitude Preserved

Jekyll Static Site Website Documentation

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CTS* 3030

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Conceptual Framing and Relationship to Relevant Work

This project, *Life Captured, Gratitude Preserved*, is framed with the goal of documenting the creation of a static site while addressing both the ethical and practical dimensions of digital curation. It draws on academic discussions across several thematic areas, including photography, computation, participatory history, multimedia storytelling, and the construction of personal identity through memory systems. Projects rooted in these domains often rely on tools and methods that are assumed to be neutral or purely technical. However, these choices are in fact inherently selective and play a significant role in shaping how data is represented and interpreted—ultimately influencing the narratives that emerge.

This project combines a photographic gallery with reflective blog entries, offering both the creator's perspective and the perspectives of those photographed. This approach creates a form of digital storytelling that invites participants to reflect on moments of

insight, challenge, or transformation. It shares thematic similarities with Brandon Stanton's *Humans of New York (HONY)*, whose data mainly consists of images and reflections of and from the public. While HONY reaches a much broader audience and is hosted on Instagram, both projects aim not to "capture" people, but to create space for their stories to breathe. Stanton collects stories through in-person interviews and uses direct quotes without interpretation, fostering an open and authentic archive. In contrast, this project gathers reflections through in-person interviews and Microsoft Forms, always with consent and permission to use reflections and images. The words and stories Brandon Stanton chooses to share alongside his posts often cover a wide range of life experiences, including reflections on trauma, displacement, and resilience. While this project also creates space for such stories to be shared, the posed interview questions include additional prompts that invite participants to reflect more deeply on the insights or lessons they may have gained—even during difficult moments. This aligns with the encouraging framework of the project, which aims to foster appreciation for life and use the act of looking back on memories as an opportunity for growth, redirection, and recognizing the lessons that any moment—no matter how small—can offer. These distinctions in method and medium allow me to explore how personal information—despite having similar content—can be sorted and presented in ways that significantly shape how audiences interpret and receive the data. A more detailed discussion of these choices will be provided in the *Ethical Considerations section of the documentation*.

Overview of Project's Key Features

Blog Posts

The heart of the project lies in blog posts that can be found on the landing page of the websites that combine photography with personal reflections from participants, accompanied by my own commentary. Titles are formulated by the creator through reflection on a synthesis of the broader themes conveyed in the participant's reflections and a description of the visual elements of the photograph itself. Each post serves as a thoughtful exploration of life moments, offering insight and shared human experiences.

a. *Photographs*

Each photograph located at the top of the blog posts was taken with a Canon EOS Rebel T6i camera, using a 75–300mm lens. The images were captured over the past several years in a variety of contexts—during travels, casual outings, or planned photoshoots. Currently, the image subjects consist of friends and family, with the goal of eventually branching out to capture images of less personally

known people that are further from the creator's immediate circle. The creator often captures candid moments, usually when no one notices the camera, to preserve a sense of authenticity. For each post, the participant selects one image from a batch of photographs taken by the creator, choosing the one they feel best represents the story they want to tell. While the image quality is intentionally reduced to fit the site's layout and adapt to different screen sizes, the emotional and visual integrity of each photo is preserved.

b. *Reflections*

The header of each blog post mentions whether the participant's responses were collected through an in-person interview or via Microsoft Forms. The same question structure is followed for both formats. However, in-person interviews often leave room for more spontaneous responses, while the form submissions tend to include deeper insights, as participants have more time to think. The process of gathering information from participants involves asking them to select an image, provide personal information and permissions for the use of their content, and answer the three questions as follows:

1. Describe how you felt in the moment this photo was captured. Share anything you can recall about the moment.
   Be honest—maybe it wasn't as wonderful as the image makes it seem. Maybe the photo didn't fully capture your experience, or maybe it did.
2. What does it mean to you for this image to be preserved—or any image, in general? (Optional)
3. This project aims to foster an appreciation for life by remembering meaningful moments and encouraging people to notice the good things even during difficult moments. Therefore, even if this photo doesn't capture the brightest moment, is there a lesson or hopeful insight you can take from it? How does this make you appreciate life more? We understand this framing may not fully reflect the complexity of the moment, so you're welcome to skip this prompt. If you do respond, your first reflection will be posted first, followed by this one. (Optional)

The responses are formatted in a Q&A style, where the answers follow a condensed version of the questions to clarify what the participants were reflecting on.

Only the in-person interviews underwent further editing—such as removing repeated ideas, trimming pauses, or rearranging thoughts if they were unorganized but still clearly reflected what the participant intended to say, with the majority (about 95%) of their original wording preserved. All other responses were only edited for grammar and spelling. The creator's reflection, located underneath the

metadata table, is a short paragraph describing what the moment looked like and the emotions or reflections it stirred within them.

c. *Metadata Table*

Underneath the Q&A responses is a metadata table that provides further information about the main source of the story—the photograph. It includes details such as the time and place the image was taken, along with a written description of the photo. This helps the viewer understand the context and environment in which the image was captured and offers a visual description for those who may not be able to see it.

d. *Author Descriptions*

Underneath the author's personal reflection is a silhouette-style profile picture of the participant who contributed to the reflection, along with a one-line description of who they are. Most of these follow the same sentence template the author provided, though a few participants chose to write their own and have that displayed instead. If they chose to share them, a "Follow" button linked to their social media appears beside their image.

e. *Categories Tags*

Every blog entry includes two category tags displayed beneath the main image of the post. Some of the categories used include "Videos," "Candid," "Nature," "Portrait," "Romance," "Birthday," "Landscape," and "Action." These tags describe what the image aims to capture, making it easier for viewers to explore posts based on visual style or theme. While some photos may appear visually similar, each one carries its own emotional and narrative weight while differences that become clear through the accompanying text.

About Me Page

The 'About Me' page, accessible through the navigation bar, includes a photo of the author and gives visitors insight into who they are—where their love for videography and photography began, their personal journey documenting people, and where they are today. The importance this work holds in the author's life helps frame the website's purpose, explaining where the passion behind it is rooted. It brings a more personal touch to the overall project and helps visitors connect with the heart behind it.

About the Project Page

This section features a gallery of images the author captured throughout their life. Each image can be clicked for closer inspection, with zoom in and out tools available. The images are also presented in an interactive, flipbook-style zine for a playful and immersive viewing experience. Short documentation blurbs appear throughout the page, sharing key details about the purpose and background of the project. The "Download Documentation" button at the bottom of the page allows users to access a full project document—like the one you're reading now.

Contact Me Page (Booking and Collaboration)

A dedicated page allows interested participants to submit their contact information to inquire about booking photoshoots or proposing ideas for collaborative documentary projects. All submissions are sent directly to the author's email, and inquiries are typically responded to in a timely manner.

Visitor Engagement Tools

a. *Comments Section*

At the end of each blog post, visitors are welcome to share feedback, encouragement, or takeaways in the comment section powered by Disqus. To participate, users must sign in using a Google, Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Microsoft, or Disqus account. At the very bottom of the comment section, Disqus provides a link to a page that explains how to exercise your privacy rights and make choices about the collection and use of your data.

b. *Newsletter Sign up*

Located on the right side of every blog post and the homepage, this feature invites visitors to enter their email address and subscribe. Subscribers receive updates via email whenever new stories are published, or changes are made to the site.

Others

a. *Multimedia Elements*

For design purposes, and to reflect the spirit of noticing and preserving life's beauty, the homepage features a video and a graphic design created by me, each accompanied by a quote. The quote on the right-side image was written by the author, while the video features a quote they have remembered and held onto. Together, these elements reinforce the themes and intentions of the website.

b. Social Media Integration

The navigation bar includes an Instagram logo button next to the site title, which links to an older photography-focused Instagram account. The intention is to revive and update this account in parallel with the website's ongoing growth.

Walkthrough Key Features

Post Pagination

Underneath the post's published date, which appears below my personal reflection, you'll find the pagination buttons. These buttons let you navigate between posts without needing to return to the home page. On the left side of the screen, you'll find a button titled with the name of the post published before the current one. On the right side is the title of the post published after. This might not always feel intuitive, but it follows a timeline order.
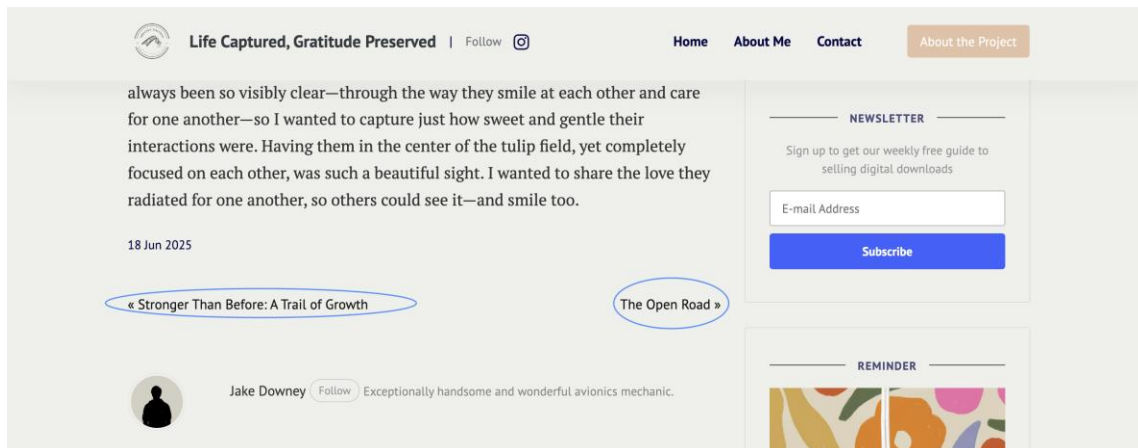
The landing page also features pagination. After every six blog posts, buttons appear to navigate between pages. The newest posts are shown at the top, with older posts displayed lower down and on subsequent pages to the right.

Locating the Privacy Policy

At the very bottom of every page, below the template creator's credit, there are three buttons. The middle button links to the privacy policy, which explains how your data is used and how you can manage it, including details about cookies and ads.

How to Participate or Book a Session (Participation Process)

Locate the Contact button in the navigation bar and enter your personal contact information. In the description box, please indicate whether you are interested in booking a photoshoot or proposing a collaborative documentary story. You'll receive a response shortly. For photoshoots, a time will be coordinated that works best for both parties and for the documentary, the storytelling approach will be discussed in person, including any necessary forms.

For documentary ideas, the process is still being developed. A template will soon be available to help you outline and brainstorm your concept, which will help the author determine whether to move forward with the project.

Downloading Documentation

After the final paragraph on the About the Project page, a button labeled "Download Project Documentation (PDF)" will appear. Clicking this button will download the documentation PDF to your local computer, where it can be opened using any standard PDF viewing application.

Using Flipbook Gallery

Click on the flipbook cover image titled "Shellx" to open the full-size zine in a new browser tab. Use the arrows on the sides of the flipbook to flip through the pages, or navigate using the timeline bar located beneath the zine.

Using Category Tags
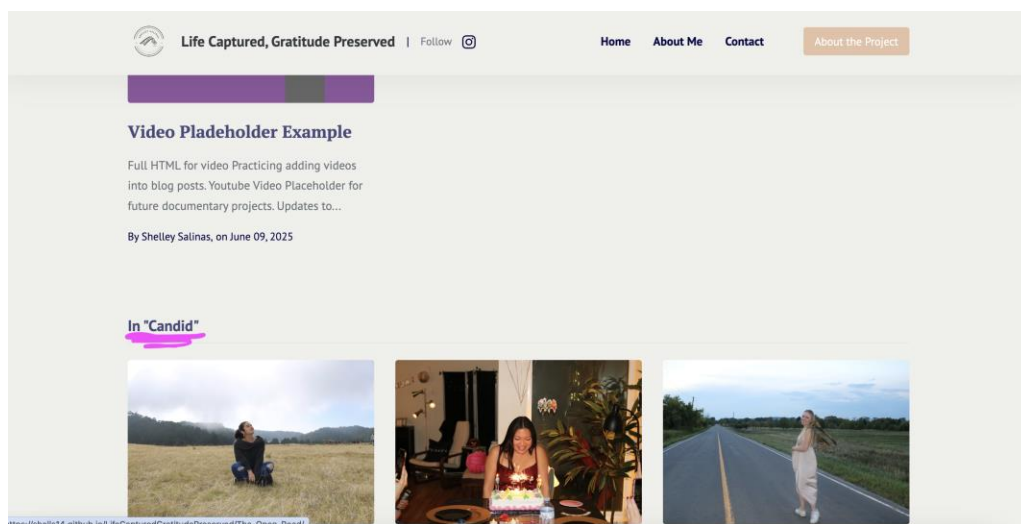
Clicking on any tag within a blog post will not take you directly to that specific category, but instead to a dedicated page that displays all posts organized by tags. The tags listed at the top are arranged based on the order in which they were first created across the entire site, with the most recently added tags appearing toward the bottom. To return to the landing page at any time, simply click on the home button, logo image, or site title.

Metadata

Metadata refers to data about data. Learning about metadata helps users understand the context and characteristics of the data itself. In this project, key data types include photographs, reflections, and the underlying HTML and CSS code that structure and style the website. Metadata tables related to the photography can be found in any blog post, and further information on curation and decisions about the photographs and reflections is located in the "Overview of Key Features" section under *Photographs and Reflections*.

HTML Metadata

The unseen metadata specific to this Jekyll website includes HTML elements that are not necessarily visible on the page itself, but are embedded inside the HTML — specifically within the <head> container of the document. Elements valuable to my site that are placed inside this container include <title> and <meta>. These tags help contextualize what the page contains and directly influence search engine optimization (SEO) and how content is processed by platforms.

For example, the <title> tag is used by search engine algorithms to determine the relevance of the page in search results. A clear, descriptive title increases the likelihood of the page being accurately matched with user queries. In this case, the title incorporates keywords that align with the thematic direction of the site: *"Life Captured, Gratitude Preserved."* These words help target an audience seeking meaningful, reflective content.

However, one limitation of this positively framed language is that it may reduce the site's visibility for users specifically searching for more vulnerable, candid discussions of personal struggle or hardship. To address that, the site incorporates a broader range of keywords and descriptive terms have been incorporated into the <meta> tags — particularly within the keywords and description fields — to expand the site's discoverability for a wider audience while maintaining alignment with its core themes.

The following metadata is defined in the _config.yml file of this Jekyll project:

```yaml
title: "Life Captured Gratitude Preserved"

description: An immersive, interactive space featuring beautiful photographs and thoughtful blog entries exploring life
through diverse experiences. These stories reveal lessons of gratitude, growth, exploration, and perspective, even in
challenging times.

tags: [photography, videography, reflection, insights, lessons, blog, candid, honest, experiences, encouraging, challenges,
life, vibrant minimalist]
```

In addition, the website includes the following metadata in the HTML <head>:

```html
<meta charset="utf-8">
```

This tag specifies the character encoding as UTF-8 (Unicode Transformation Format – 8-bit), which supports a wide range of characters including accented letters, emojis, and symbols from various global languages. This ensures the website remains accessible and properly rendered across different devices and languages without causing any strange symbols or errors.

GitHub Website Code

You can view what else was included in the code, as well as the structure of the site — including HTML, YAML, CSS, Markdown, and Sass files — through the creator's GitHub account under the 'LifeCapturedGratitudePreserved' folder. The ongoing process can be tracked through commits and pushes.

Provenance, Scope, Data Organization

Provenance: Digital Humanities Workshop 2025

This project was initiated during the *Digital Humanities 2025 Summer Workshops* at the University of Guelph, specifically in the workshop titled **"Introduction to Minimal Web Design with Jekyll"** taught by Professor Chelsea Miya and Ryan Chartier. The workshop emphasized the importance of returning to minimal web design, contrasting it with platform-based website builders such as Wix or WordPress, which often limit customization and impose restrictive control over layout customization and data.

Such commercial platforms contribute to issues such as enshittification, techno-feudalism, and surveillance capitalism. They determine how data is collected, stored, and distributed, and place personal information and creative labor into the

hands of corporations. In contrast, minimal web design using static site generators like Jekyll, enables creators to reclaim control over their content and fosters greater transparency regarding the power dynamics embedded in the tools used to build websites. These concerns significantly informed the origins of this project and shaped its development toward a more ethical, user-controlled digital environment.

On the other hand, the thematic focus of this project emerged from a strong interest in viewing photographs as a means of remembering meaningful moments and learning from them. This perspective informed the development of the site's two main purposes:

1. **To help people appreciate life** through quiet moments captured in photographs—images that serve as digital keepsakes of memory and gratitude.
2. **To offer new perspectives** by sharing reflections that reveal how differently people experience and interpret life events, fostering a sense of gratitude for the insights these stories can inspire.

The name of the site *Life Captured, Gratitude Preserved* reflects this mission: to capture the beauty of ordinary life and appreciate what it can teach us.

Further theoretical and methodological guidance comes from readings explored in the CTS Summer Workshops course (CTS 3030). Both assigned and individually selected texts emphasize that digital storytelling is not a neutral process—it is shaped by ethical, technical, and narrative choices.

The ongoing development of this project continues to be influenced by these ideas, which will be discussed in more detail in the sections on *Ethical Considerations* and *Tools & Methods*.

Scope

This project is currently local in scope, drawing primarily on photographs of friends and family—individuals who are most accessible to the creator at this stage. A collaborative approach is central to the methodology, with a focus on documenting the everyday lives of ordinary individuals rather than well-known figures or major events. By capturing small yet meaningful facets of personal experience, particularly within the context of life in Ontario, the project aims to contribute to future scholarship. Digital blogs and personal narratives such as these may offer valuable insights into 21st-century lived realities.

As the project develops and the creator begins booking photoshoots with individuals outside their immediate circle, they will be asked to contribute written reflections following their photoshoots, if interested. Future phases, including documentary work, will further engage individuals who may not otherwise have the opportunity to share their stories.

Storing Data Through Forms, Audio Recordings and Excel Sheets

Data collected from reflection forms and in-person interviews is initially stored in separate formats but later merged into a unified system. Form responses are saved as written records using results charts, while in-person interviews are recorded as audio files, then transcribed. These transcriptions are entered into the same Excel sheet where the form results are already stored, organized by question. This approach ensures that both digital and in-person responses are consistently recorded and securely archived for analysis.

Methods and Tools

In *Data Feminism*, Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein explain how data work often involves invisible labor—like emotional effort and unrecognized contributions. It is important to acknowledge this unseen work during the processes of collecting, visualizing, and analyzing data. These methods and tools offer a glimpse into the process behind the project, rather than only presenting a polished final product.

Technical Tools:

Tools and platforms used to build and present the project:

- **Canva**: Designed the site logo, reminder-box image, landing page header-image, author silhouette profile pictures, and pre-designed PDF pages for the zine later embedded into FlowPaper.
- **Disqus**: Enabled user commenting and feedback on the site blog posts.
- **Microsoft Excel**: Used to record responses from interviews and forms, storing participant data.
- **FlowPaper**: Used to create an interactive zine showcasing photograph PDF.
- **Font Awesome**: Used for the download icon on the documentation button in *About Project* page.
- **Formspree**: Used to collect information from website visitors who fill out the *Contact Me* page.

- **GitHub**: Hosted the static website, making the project publicly accessible while also serving as a development log by tracking changes to the code through commits and pushes.
- **Glightbox CSS/JS**: Implemented a responsive image gallery allowing zoom-in/out interactions for images.
- **Google Fonts (Gloria Hallelujah)**: Used specifically for video quote overlays.
- **Jekyll**: Used to generate and locally develop a static website.
- MailChimp: Used to send newsletters to website visitors.
- **Markdown Guide**: Basic Syntax guide on how to format Markdown for .md files.
- **Microsoft Forms**: Used to gather participant responses.
- **Sal's Affiliates Theme**: Provided a Bootstrap-based theme that served as the website's structural foundation.
- **Visual Studio Code**: Open-source code editor used to write and edit HTML and CSS within my website folder.
- **W3Schools**: Referred to HTML/CSS refresher tutorials and used for implementing unfamiliar features.
- Google Document *Instructions for Publishing a Jekyll Website on GitPages* provided by Professor Chelsea Miya

Academic Readings Shaping Argument and Project Framing:

Theoretical grounding played an essential role in shaping how this site approached storytelling, ethics, and preservation. These readings informed the digital methods and ethical frameworks of this project, following citations are in MLA format:

- Burdick, A., et al. (2012). Section 2: Emerging methods and genres. In *Digital_Humanities* (pp. 27–71). MIT Press

- Dekker, Annet. "Methodologies of Multimedial Documentation and Archiving." *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press , Amsterdam , 2013, pp. 149–195.

- Dombrowski, Q. (2022). *Minimizing computing maximizes labor*. DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly: Minimizing Computing Maximizes Labor. https://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/16/2/000594/000594.html

- Falcini, Louise, and Peter Collinge. "Public Histories and Collaborative Working." *Providing for the Poor: The Old Poor Law, 1750–1834*, University of London Press, 2022, pp. 199–218.

- Heersmink, Richard. "Distributed selves: Personal identity and extended memory systems." *Synthese*, vol. 194, no. 8, 28 Apr. 2016, pp. 3135–3151, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-016-1102-4.

- HILL, A. (2024). *Digital Storytelling and Ethics: Collaborative Creation and facilitation*. ROUTLEDGE.

- Miya, Chelsea. *"Metadata."* Digital Humanities Workshop, 12–15 May 2025, University of Guelph. Minimal Web Design Workshop presentation.

- Miya, Chelsea. *"Welcome Back to The Early Web."* Digital Humanities Workshop, 12–15 May 2025, University of Guelph. Minimal Web Design Workshop presentation.

- Papadaki, Eirini. "Mediating mediations of the past: Monuments on photographs, postcards and Social Media." *Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1 Dec. 2019, pp. 134–154, https://doi.org/10.18680/hss.2019.0027.

- Redwine, Gabriela. "Key Issues and Concerns Related to Personal Digital Archives." *Personal Digital Archiving*, Digital Preservation Coalition, Great Britain, 2015, pp. 10–18.

- Stanton, Brandon. "Photographer & Author." *Humans of New York*, www.humansofnewyork.com/. Accessed 27 May 2025.

- Watson, Ian. "WEAVING THE WEB ." *The Universal Machine: From the Dawn of Computing to Digital Consciousness*, Copernicus Books, New York, 2012, pp. 161–182, https://books-scholarsportal-info.us1.proxy.openathens.net/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks2/springer/2012-06-14/1/9783642281020#page=12.

User Interface Design Methods

Informed by both Gestalt principles and Principles of Design from the University of Guelph's User Interface Design (**CIS2170)** course, the creator focused on creating an intuitive and ethically considerate user experience.

Principles of Design Used:

- **Visual Hierarchy**: Emphasized contrast, font size, and color to make key elements stand out (e.g., headers, buttons).
- **Repetition**: Multiple elements share consistent characteristics; for example, all header titles and button labels use the same color and follow a unified color palette across the site.
- **Proximity**: All blog posts are positioned close together, making it intuitive for users to understand that they are related and encouraging connections between different parts of the site.
- **Balance and Negative Space**: Negative space is used between the participant reflections, metadata table, and the creator's personal reflection to help viewers focus on one area of the site at a time

Gestalts Principles:

- **Figure/Ground**: Backgrounds and color contrasts were used to make navigation intuitive and reduce cognitive load. Key elements of the site are placed in commonly expected areas, based on common browsing habits. The brain naturally looks for structured and familiar layouts, therefore the site uses implementation of bolded headers and bold background color in buttons to increase their visibility.
- **Symmetry and Order**: Structured content into clearly marked sections using dividing lines, turning longer reflections into manageable, scannable segments.

Accessibility Considerations:

The site incorporates fallback features such as alt text for all images and videos, ensuring accessibility if elements fail to load. These features are present across galleries, blog posts, and logo images.

Digital Humanities Methods

The project engages with key practices within Digital Humanities:

- **Ethical Digital Storytelling**: Prioritized consent and respectful representation of participants and their stories.
- **Community-Engaged Research**: Participants contributed their reflections, which was treated as co-created knowledge.
- **Close Reading and Metadata Structuring**: Carefully edited and organized reflections to preserve individual voice while aligning all stories with broader life themes.
- **Textual Analysis and Search Optimization**: Key blog post terms inspired category tags used to support accurate related-posts search results.
- **Critical Curation**: All images, metadata, and stories were systematically collected, catalogued, and archived for long-term preservation via forms, documents and excel sheets.

Key Choices, Decisions, or Changes in Approach and Their Implications

Over time, the website evolved significantly from the original project proposal. Several key decisions and adjustments were made, each with meaningful implications for the direction, ethics, and design of the final project.

1. Inclusion of In-Person Interviews

Initially, all participant reflections were to be collected through digital forms. However, after engagement with *Public Histories and Collaborative Working* by Falcini and Collinge (2022), the approach shifted. The text's discussion of the *Small Bits* project— where contributors collaborated in person using a more localized, hands-on model— inspired a hybrid method for my own project. This change resulted in the integration of two complementary approaches:

- A **digital survey**, allowing participants to submit reflections online at their convenience
- **In-person interviews**, offering opportunities for deeper, more nuanced dialogue

The contrast between the two formats revealed distinct strengths in each. Digital forms allowed participants more time to reflect and articulate their thoughts in depth, while in-person interviews tended to elicit more immediate, candid responses. Both methods proved valuable, offering complementary insights shaped by the participants' comfort levels and communication preferences.

2. Introduction of a Follow-Up Form

A second form was distributed to participants approximately two weeks after the initial one. Again, influenced by *Public Histories and Collaborative Working*, the importance of treating participants not simply as sources of data, but as co-authors and collaborators in the storytelling process is recognized.

The follow-up form invited participants to:

- Write a one-sentence self-description
- Choose whether to include their social media handles alongside their reflection

While many opted to keep the default one-sentence description, this approach gave participants greater autonomy and control over how they are represented—reinforcing their individuality and authorship within the project.

3. Design Decision: Chunking Long Content

Originally, blog posts were intended to merge participant reflections and the creator's responses into one unified text. However, this approach led to dense, text-heavy pages. To improve readability and user experience, the site adopted the design principle of chunking—a method that breaks down large blocks of information into smaller, more manageable sections.

This design choice supports cognitive ease, reduces information overload, and helps viewers process and remember the content more effectively.

4. Font Selection for Accessibility

Font choice was another deliberate decision. After researching legibility standards, the creator selected a font that met best practices for readability—including considerations for users with dyslexia or other reading challenges. This aligned with accessibility goals and ensured a more inclusive experience for all visitors.

5. Language Simplification for Broader Accessibility

Informed by communication strategies from the University of Guelph's Science Communication (**ASCI3100)** course, the creator made a conscious effort to avoid overly

academic jargon within the site's text. Where appropriate, simplified language was used to ensure the site remains accessible to general audiences.

6. Enhancing the Image Gallery with FlowPaper

To bring energy and creativity to the site, FlowPaper was chosen as the platform for building interactive zine. This tool allowed the creator to design a visually engaging, interactive experience—setting the gallery apart from more conventional, static web layouts. This decision was further informed by feedback indicating that the site adopted a newspaper or magazine-style aesthetic, which I sought to maintain consistently across the image gallery.

7. Rewording Blog Questions for Clarity

Some blog post interview questions were reworded during the writing phase. These edits were made to improve clarity of the question while preserving the original intent. The goal was to make the content easier to read without compromising the depth or emotional resonance of each entry.

Ethical Considerations

This project was shaped by a series of ethical considerations that emerged at various stages—from conceptualization and data collection to design and long-term preservation. In alignment with principles from data feminism, digital humanities, and participatory archival practices, these considerations were addressed through both practical decisions and critical reflection.

Website Generator Platform

As noted in the provenance section, ethical concerns arose early in the design process—particularly around how the site would frame data and the degree of control granted to the creator. As a result, the switch from a content management system to static site generators like Jekyll was made, for the reasons outlined above.

Data Framing and Selectivity

During a metadata workshop led by Professor Chelsea Miya, participants were asked to consider the inherently subjective nature of digital data. Drawing on Lisa Gitelman's claim that "raw data is an oxymoron," Miya emphasized that data is never

purely objective. As she explained, "like a photographer, the data gatherer must choose where their lens points and what falls within the frame" (Miya, "Metadata," slide 9).

This aligns with Eirini Papadaki's argument that photographs are not neutral records, but tools of memory-making that capture and elevate certain moments over others (Papadaki, 2019, p. 145). In this project, that idea translated into a curatorial awareness of which reflections, images, and metadata to include. Each selection was shaped by the understanding that these elements help form a broader narrative—and that such narratives must be constructed thoughtfully, transparently, and responsibly. To ensure equitable data framing and representational integrity, participants were invited to select from a curated set of photographs taken from multiple angles. This approach aimed to balance aesthetic considerations with participant agency, mitigating bias by allowing subjects to influence how their visual data was presented.

Ethical Documentation Practices

Beyond the final product, documenting the *process* of creation was also treated as an ethical imperative. Drawing on Annet Dekker's chapter "Methodologies of Multimedial Documentation," the project acknowledges that documentation should not merely describe outcomes but provide a record of conceptual, technical, and curatorial choices. Dekker reminds us of the Latin root of the word "document"—*documentum*—which originally meant a teaching or instructive example. This interpretation aligns with the workshop's emphasis on reflective curation and transparency throughout the project lifecycle.

Accordingly, the site includes comprehensive documentation of technical tools, methods, and all ethical considerations within this documentation PDF, reflecting a strong commitment to ethically informed and transparent design of the entire process—not just the final project.

Participant Representation and Co-Authorship

Influenced by Louise Falcini and Peter Collinge's work in *Public Histories and Collaborative Working*, the project aims to treat participants not merely as data sources but as co-creators. Drawing on Samuels' concept of "social forms of knowledge," the project promotes collaborative contributions and distributed authorship. This approach resists a singular narrative of meaning and instead supports plural perspectives that emerge from collective memory.

Practical steps to reflect this include:

- Offering participants the opportunity to provide a one-sentence self-description
- Including the option to share social media handles alongside reflections
- Crediting participants by name in blog posts and zines

These measures were designed to respect participant autonomy and acknowledge their role in shaping the narrative.

The Role of the Web in Ethical Knowledge Sharing

The project's digital format itself carries ethical implications. As a web-based initiative, it participates in broader transformations of public history through increased access, shared authorship, and community engagement. Ian Watson's *The Universal Machine* discusses how Tim Berners-Lee's development of the World Wide Web enabled a shift from local physical storage to globally accessible digital archives. This technological transformation, described as "weaving the web," laid the groundwork for collaborative digital projects like this one.

This global archival potential echoes Eirini Papadaki's concept of "cosmopolitanism," in which individuals can share personal collections online that contribute to a distributed and participatory global memory (Papadaki, 2019). These considerations also resonate with Richard Heersmink's theory of *distributed selves*, where digital traces—like blog posts and image galleries—serve as extensions of memory and identity (*Synthese*, 2016). By contributing to digital archives, individuals are actively participating in the construction of personal and collective knowledge.

Licensing, Access, and Digital Ownership

The ethical responsibility of long-term access, licensing, and data control was also considered. Gabriela Redwine raises important questions in *Personal Digital Archiving* about the ownership and control of data hosted on third-party cloud platforms. Her concerns about transparency and sustainability influenced the decision to distribute the project under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License**. This licensing model allows others to share and reuse materials with proper attribution while prohibiting commercial use.

To further ensure ethical integrity:

- Each blog post includes full credit to the contributor
- Licensing information is clearly displayed at the bottom of every page
- The website is hosted openly but non-commercially via GitHub Pages

These measures uphold participant rights and contribute to an equitable digital knowledge ecosystem.

Limitations and ongoing challenges

Problem: Broad Category Tags

A key challenge in the current design is the use of broad or overly generalized category tags. These tags may lack the specificity needed to meaningfully describe or distinguish images, potentially limiting the user's ability to navigate and interpret the content effectively. There is also uncertainty about whether the existing categories accurately reflect the diverse emotional and narrative contexts represented in the images.

Solution:

To ensure category tags are accurate, detailed, and informed by public perspectives, card sorting tests will be conducted. Participants from diverse backgrounds will be asked to group images according to what makes sense to them. This method will help reveal how categories naturally emerge, clarify the reasoning behind grouping decisions, and reduce the influence of individual bias in the tagging process.

Additional strategies include:

- **Passive tracking**: Using eye-tracking technology to observe where users naturally look for specific elements, helping inform an accessible and intuitive site layout.
- **Benchmarking**: Analyzing similar websites to understand common design patterns, such as the consistent placement of navigation bars at the top of pages, which supports user familiarity.
- **Usability testing**: Conducting sessions to ensure that forms effectively inform functionality and that design elements—like adding a logo on the download button—enhance clarity.
  - This approach draws on principles discussed in the Science Communication (ASCI3000) course related to semantic symbols, where specific visuals are intuitively associated with meanings or concepts. By connecting images with symbolic significance, users can understand functions and ideas without

requiring additional explanation, thereby improving accessibility and user experience.

Card Sorting Details

Card sorting involves asking users to organize "cards" (representing images or concepts) into groups that make sense to them. This process helps mimic user cognition and reduces cognitive load by aligning the website's structure with natural user expectations.

- Cards may include links, images, and descriptions.
- **Qualitative data**: Participants verbalize their reasoning during sorting, providing insight into thought processes.
- **Quantitative data**: Statistical analyses identify common grouping patterns, clustering, and categories that frequently co-occur.

Post-sorting questions may include:

- Which items were difficult to categorize?
- Are there items that belong in multiple groups?

Open card sorting allows participants to create their own categories, while closed sorting uses predefined group names, helping compare user mental models to the existing structure.

Recognizing the busy schedules of primary users, monetary incentives will be offered to encourage participation in usability testing. Awareness will be promoted through information booths at locations frequently visited by target users, such as universities, gyms, markets, and parks, providing details on how to participate.

Methodological Considerations

Unlike fully rigid categorization, this project intends to loosely organize images by visual or situational themes—such as weddings, birthdays, landscapes, and candid shots—while explicitly acknowledging that these categories do not define the meaning of each moment. This approach respects the uniqueness of each photograph's emotional and narrative weight.

This reflects a key methodological tension between facilitating digital browsing through organization and resisting reductionism in storytelling.

Newsletter Functionality Notice

The newsletter subscription feature is currently non-functional, as a Mailchimp account has not yet been set up. Until an alternative solution that is either free or more affordable is identified, this functionality will remain inactive. The newsletter form will be retained on the site with a notice advising users of its current status. An update will be provided as soon as the feature is fully operational.

Conclusion

This documentation has outlined the tools, methods, and ethical considerations that shaped the development of this project. By emphasizing transparency, collaboration, and intentional design choices, the work reflects a commitment to thoughtful digital storytelling and responsible data practices. Future improvements may include expanded usability testing and continued engagement with community feedback to ensure accessibility and inclusivity remain at the center of the project's evolution.

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