Digital Resources: Digital Informal Archives in Contemporary Brazil

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Summary

The category of "informal archives" was initially proposed by Adam Auerbach in a case study on the role of informal archives held by social leaders of peripheral communities in India. "Informal archives" imply forms of historical documentation beyond state authority, and preserved in a rough, poor, and ephemeral manner (in the digital realm). They typically involve connections to the past articulated by different social demands, whether regarding the dispute for a national memory in the digital-public realm, or the nostalgic nature of certain connections to the past, or even the social/political activism of civil society organizations. For this reason, informal archives are in unmapped locations, and in order to be accessed they need to be ethnographically reached. An empirical research based on data raised in early 2020 shows that, even with the creation of a theoretical basis for this kind of digital resource, constant updates will remain necessary due to the unstable nature of the subject.

Keywords: informal archives, digital archives, memory, digital humanities, digital history, history of Brazil, theory of history

Subjects: History of Brazil, Digital Innovations, Sources, and Interdisciplinary Approaches, Intellectual History

The Development of Digital Informal Archives: Brazil and Beyond

Informal archives consist of collections of documents and historical materials held by individuals or groups outside the state authority as result from either individual or institutional initiatives. They comprise historical resources related to subjects that are not usually covered by more authoritative historical discourses, such as the experiences of minorities and marginalized groups, and the historical experience of ordinary people. Because informal archives are not at the service of preserving their owner's memory, they differ both from official and personal archives. The clear distinction between public (official) and private (personal) archives is indistinct. Therefore, informal archives occupy the threshold between people's historical experience and the memories the state is not able or willing to acknowledge.

Digital informal archives are characterized, at a first level, by their uncertain location, lack of a stricter systematization of documents, detachment from state authority, relation with a wider media environment, and the frequent reproduction of materials already published and/or stored in other websites and archival institutions. At a subsequent level, these features, which could be perceived as "weaknesses" of digital informal archives, are transformed into the very strengths they bring to the contemporary archival landscape. Digital informal archives are, at the same

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time, a means to disclose history and a subject of ethnographic research, which makes it possible to study how history is understood by individual or collective social actors. Hence, they are both archives and memorials.

Informal archives—digital or not—are based on the diffuse initiative of addressing the heritage left aside by state-owned archives or even by personal archives of renowned owners. However, that is not to say that informal archiving initiatives are less important with regard to the criteria—handled in any archival practice—of what is to be remembered or forgotten in terms of relevance and political position. On the contrary, informal archives are more than complementary to official archives or those established in formal institutions, as they often delineate a political action of competition and criticism against the authority and sovereignty of the traditional archiving practice. This competitiveness is clearer in the case of informal archives organized by historically marginalized communities or initiatives with a political agenda toward the empowerment of civil society organizations. When it comes to digital informal archives, this aspect is even greater. The intermediation of software and operational protocols by private servers add some complexity to the opposition between control and management of data, which is imposed by digital archives in contrast to traditional archives. With the wide use of social networks, informal archives were catalyzed and placed in the constant memory disputes that go hand in hand with the circulation and appropriation of the past in the digital-public realm, reinforcing the need for proper care toward the analysis of the contemporary archival landscape.

The first discussions about online archiving cut across relevant discussions within the archival science as well as the debate on *archival turn*, insofar as it approached the problem of the authority of historians in the face of materials that were gaining space over the internet.[1] A closer relationship between historians, digital archives, and vernacular memories was pioneered by the work of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (CHNM), headquartered in the George Mason University, United States, chiefly because of the emphasis given to the September 11th Digital Archive. Launched in March 2002, six-months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the archive stood out for its reach, holding about 150 thousand digital objects, and awareness to implement a series of transitions—as private to public, and offline to online.[2]

The September 11th Digital Archive also inaugurated an online archiving model that has been countlessly repeated ever since: the *crowdsourcing* of testimonies among users, allowing for a collection based on the materials sent. To this end, the initiative used a specific software—Omeka—developed by the CHNM itself, still used in online archiving initiatives. The digital archives based on the CHNM model are also informal archives and may be understood as "provoked archives," since their records are specific to these initiatives and result from the mobilization of a mass of users connected to the website.

In Brazil, the process of creating online archives is quite different. Digital archives have gained strength after the emergence of large digitalization projects, that is, flagship projects, such as those carried out by the Biblioteca Nacional Digital and the Biblioteca Brasiliana Digital. Because the Biblioteca Nacional Digital was developed with the involvement of the State (it is a foundation linked to the Ministry of Culture) and the Biblioteca Brasiliana Digital (even though originated from a private archive) is linked to the University of São Paulo, these initiatives do not fit in the

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category of informal archives, for they are based on projects recognized by the public authority, have significant funding, digitize existent collections, and employ practices to ensure the quality and relevance of their material cataloging. Other institutions, however, draw near to the model of digital informal archives approached here.

This is especially the case of the Museu da Pessoa, founded in São Paulo in 1991, which merged oral history and the principles that led to an increased flexibility in the categories of "archive" and "museum." Aligned with precepts of civil society empowerment, in the heart of the third sector, the Museu da Pessoa focuses on the collection and organization of exhibitions concerning the life experience of ordinary people. This institution is also a pioneer in the use of the internet as a means for online exhibition and the storage of materials, through its website, launched in 1996. The website enabled the Museu da Pessoa to store and present its own generated records, which are mostly in audio and video format. Also, because of the nature of digital technologies, the website allowed users to draw their own path through the available documents and experience the interactivity that distinguishes the digital environment. The website's importance for the institution is acknowledged by its founder, Karen Worcman, who has described the Museu da Pessoa as a "virtual museum of life stories."[3]

Even so, initiatives like the Museu da Pessoa are marginal in Brazil, chiefly because of the financial and technical constraints involved in creating such websites. That is why the creation of digital informal archives was leveraged by the emergence of platforms and social networks linked to Web 2.0. Since the emergence of social media in the early 2000s, many online memory initiatives and informal archiving projects are carried out on the platforms of large social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as by means of instant publishing tools, such as Blogger, maintained by Google. This reflects one the main hardships concerning the study of digital informal archives and of the internet in general. Studying digital informal archives means not only understanding how different groups and social actors perceive history, their practices of archiving, and how they relate to the past, but also whether, as Niels Brügger and Ralph Schroeder posit, it is possible to use the Web itself to understand the past.[4]

Historiographical Perspectives: Discussion of the Literature

The category of informal archives was initially proposed by Adam Auerbach in a case study on the role of informal archives held by social leaders of peripheral communities in India. For Auerbach, the archives are not considered informal because of their nonofficial nature, since they can also include documents produced by the state; their informality is a result of nonsystematic preservation in places not originally designed to be accessible either to researchers or officeholders. That is why informal archives are in unmapped locations and need to be ethnographically reached in order to be accessed. Another characteristic of informal archives is the absence of a reliable catalog (if any), making it difficult to establish the context of documents. Even so, they do not derive from occasional practice, but from a continuous collection of documents.[5]

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The emergence of a widely accessed internet in the ’90s increased the number of unmapped locations in which individuals and social groups could store their memories. The internet, as well as the different platforms and social networks it allows for, made room for what Aaron Hess and Lee Jarvis called “vernacular memories,” that is, the interpretations of significant events and processes by individuals that figure in the margin of official speeches.[6] Such initiatives are not concerned with the speeches that are most widespread through official channels and/or consolidated media, but unlike these speeches, they approach collective matters through an individual viewpoint, showing how “ordinary people” appreciate history.[7] According to Roy Rosenzweig and David Cohen, from their experience with the September 11th Digital Archive, an advantage of this kind of archive is, in fact, the increased coverage of historical documentation so as to include personal and subjective experiences.[8]

In the case of Brazil, digital memory initiatives followed both the relatively late entrance of the internet in the country and state-based plans toward the digitalization of historical resources.[9] The internet began to operate commercially in Brazil in 1995, but the first discussions regarding digital sovereignty and the establishment of a particularly Brazilian space to hold digital collections only effectively began in the second half of the first decade of the 21st century. These discussions followed the projects held by the private sector’s tech giants, such as Google Books, but also looked closely to national projects, such as France’s Gallica BNF. Even if there were already projects such as the Biblioteca Brasiliana Digital and the beginning of the digitalization of the collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, it was only by the end of the 21 century’s first decade that these debates were consolidated into an overall project for the establishment of Brazilian digital archives. These projects were central to Brazil’s Plano Nacional de Cultura, approved in 2011, which stated the aim to digitalize entire collections of a number of state institutions in the country. Besides these projects, more horizontal initiatives, such as Rede Memorial, established by a consortium of public universities in Northeastern Brazil, were also put into operation.

These projects were put on hold, however, as the decade of 2010 progressed, and Brazil became involved in a continued political and economic crisis. At the same time, the development of social networks and the entrance of debates related to public history, whose discussions in Brazil were initiated in 2011, established a line of action in the confluence of historical knowledge and the use of social media networks to divulge it.[10] This movement closely followed what was happening in other countries, as the emergence of digital humanities sought to understand and establish frontiers between the application of computation methods in historical research and the employment of social network platforms to reach a broader audience.[11] On the positive side, this brought a rush to academic institutions to broaden their concerns regarding the social reach of their researches, while also bringing to the fore popular apprehensions of the past; on the negative side, it showed that informal archives were undertheorized on the overall reflection about historical archives, and, at the same time, that they were not incorporated as objects of research, but mainly as tools to bring the historical research closer to the general public.

The relation between informal archives, digital technologies, and state-led projects is relevant to understanding how these initiatives differ from official historical archives as well as how they exist in a specific mediascape. According to Hess, online memory initiatives are relevant not only

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because of the records they hold, but also because of the relationships they create between individuals and their communities of origin.[12] Only a few online initiatives have original documents, and so it is common to see the same image or publication in different groups and websites; additionally, such initiatives impair the recovery of information and rarely have cataloging resources other than those provided by the digital platforms themselves. In this regard, these projects could also be studied in an ethnographical perspective for what they say about the concepts of history, archiving, and memory expounded by the communities and actors that organize and maintain these initiatives.

The field of digital ethnography is already well established in Brazilian sociology, political science, and anthropology, but it lacks a better representation in historical studies. One such example is the PhD thesis of Odilon Caldeira Neto, a pioneer work that studies the growing usage of the internet by right-wing political factions in the early 2000s.[13] This project looks at the source of many contemporary interpretations of Brazilian history on social media, especially the reinvigorated valorization of 19th-century Brazilian monarchy. More contemporary studies, such as the one held by Ricardo Santhiago and Valéria B. Magalhães regarding community archives in the periphery of São Paulo, bring historical studies close to what in the English-speaking world is called "radical archiving."[14] Those community projects have a place in museum studies in Brazil, especially regarding community museums and memorial sites, but also lack more visibility in Brazilian historical studies.

Thus, it is worth remembering that, as Gabriella Giannachi states, archives became more fluid after the incorporation of digital technologies, especially those originated from Web 2.0. As a result, such archives are not so much a storage space as they are a place to accomplish collaborative actions.[15] The archives became interactive, immersive, and pervasive, dissolving the temporal distance between production and archiving, which according to Wolfgang Ernst amounts to the real "archival difference."[16] The current archives—including digital informal archives—are often the result of coordinated practices and, instead of engaging with the construction of a potential memory for the future, they reinforce identity bonds. This places digital informal archives at the crossroads of different areas of research, making them hold a special place in the theoretical understanding of what a historical archive is.

Structure, Organization, and Supporters of Digital Informal Archives in Brazil

In Brazil, the use of digital informal archives follows wider worldwide internet trends, which also affects the work of historians interested in the matter. Analyses on the sampled experiences of digital informal archiving show the dominance of the most popular social networks in the country, such as Facebook and Instagram. The constant reformulation of these platforms' technical standards, as well as the volatility of published information and the users' short-lived engagement trends, provide these initiatives with an uncertain character that impairs any attempt of thoroughly mapping trajectories and origins. Digital informal archives currently on Facebook pages or groups were either created specifically on this platform or migrated from other social networks, leaving no trace whatsoever of this transition. Similarly, informal archives

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operating on Instagram, whose massive use in Brazil has superseded that of Facebook, have also been specifically created on this platform or had their Facebook pages progressively canceled and abandoned by their creators and users as they migrated to Instagram.

The dependence of informal archiving initiatives on the use of social networks requires the adherence to an "attention economy," often assessed by performance metrics—"likes" and "shares". However, there are active groups and pages with high-engagement potential showing that such initiatives, although dependent on a social network's rise or fall in popularity, are capable of forging community bonds among users gathered around a common interest.

The ease of constructing and reconstructing digital informal archives over different platforms hinders the work of historians interested in understanding the historicity of such initiatives. The ephemeral nature of the records generated by these initiatives, in addition to the unavailability of access within a five-, ten-, or fifteen-year time span, makes it virtually impossible to properly reconstruct the trajectory of such digital archives. In the Brazilian case, a clear illustration of this is the elimination of groups and messages on Orkut, the main social network used in the country between 2004 and 2010. The termination of this platform, and the permanent deletion of its content by Google in 2017, consigned to oblivion the universe created and shared among its users, as well as subjects of study of the past. Although it was not possible to carry out a clear assessment on the matter, odds are that many analyzed initiatives began on this platform.

Nevertheless, a small number of online initiatives are linked to groups and entities whose practice is not entirely dependent on social networks. Such is the case of the Museu da Pessoa, as well as the Instituto São Paulo Antiga, and Rio Memórias. Although these initiatives operate in the field of historical cultural heritage, they are significantly different. The Instituto São Paulo Antiga is a civil society organization that gathers together people interested in old mansions and other constructions that depict the architectural heritage of São Paulo. Created in 2009, this initiative became an official institute in 2019, consolidating their mission of documenting and preserving the residential, commercial, and industrial architectural heritage of the largest city in the country. This work is chiefly done by nonprofessional collaborators interested in São Paulo's heritage, who catalog the old houses in the city.

Rio Memórias, on the other hand, is a project supported by the Municipal Culture Secretariat of Rio de Janeiro, though independently maintained. Created by Livia Baião, the project is described as a "virtual space," with the "purpose of recovering, valuing and updating the history and culture of Rio de Janeiro."[17] Thus, it consists of a long-term project whose main disclosure mechanism depends on social networks, and whose maintenance is through funding notices supporting the culture of both the city and state of Rio de Janeiro. Rio Memórias is thus situated on the fine line between official and nonofficial memories, just like informal archives.

The previous examples—the Museu da Pessoa, the Instituto São Paulo Antiga, and Rio Memórias—show that the structure, organization, and functionality of some of the soundest initiatives of online informal archiving in Brazil refer to the establishment of civil society in the country. A fourth example is the Memorial da Democracia, a "virtual museum" maintained by the Instituto Lula (linked to the Brazilian former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), which highlights

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initiatives of struggle and resistance throughout the history of republican Brazil. All these cases show memory initiatives outside the range of official institutions, even though they are not completely detached from the state cultural funding instruments in Brazil. As a matter of fact, it is often the engagement of the state that helps spread these alternative practices, which run alongside the official history.

There are initiatives that straddle the line between formal and informal archival practices, especially as they originate in a close relationship to university institutions, even though are not bound by them. These initiatives are mainly concerned with the history of disenfranchised groups, such as Brazilian indigenous peoples (Os Brasis e Suas Memórias, Povos Indígenas do RN), the LGBTQ+ community (Projeto Conte), vulnerable communities (Museu da Maré), or the suppressed histories of Black people (Cultne, Salvador Escravista). The coronavirus pandemic has also initiated similar projects, especially because of the official neglect toward victims of Covid-19 in Brazil. These include Inumeráveis, which provides biographical stubs of the victims of the pandemic; Memórias Covid (of national scope), held at the University of Campinas;[18] História da Pandemia na Baixada Fluminense (of local scope), organized by the Digital Humanities Laboratory of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro; Cartografia das Memórias, maintained by the Brazilian NGO Silo; or the Instagram page Varal de Emoções, a community-based practice dedicated to gathering testimonies of inhabitants of Rocinha, the largest urban slum in Rio de Janeiro, regarding their experiences during the pandemic. It is also worth mentioning that some projects draw together both the nostalgia of a specific time and place and the reunion of testimonies related to the pandemic, such as the project O Recife que eu vi, on Instagram. This initiative, by the Federal University of Pernambuco, incentivizes elderly people to share some of their personal photographs and testimonies related to the history of this important capital in Northeastern Brazil.

Therefore, a clear characteristic of the main digital informal archives in Brazil is the dependence on social networks, which confounds the scopes of storage and disclosure of information. Besides, it is also possible to assert that such initiatives are carried out by three classes of individuals and/or groups: common users interested in history and memory; organizations and entities from civil society; and scholars. These groups are accountable for the principally analyzed initiatives of online informal archiving.

Lastly, it is worth noting that digital access to the internet and to personal devices such as smartphones and computers are requirements to the existence of digital informal archives. Therefore, considering Brazil's large extension, diversity, and inequality, there are some regions in the country that create many more online collections than others. In fact, this problem extends to the global discussion concerning digital archives, from the digitalization of physical archives to online informal archiving initiatives.[19] In the Brazilian informal digital archival landscape, the regional disparity in terms of digital access is reflected not only in the number of collections, which is bigger in more economically developed regions, but also in the collections' size and popularity—measured by number of followers, for example. As a result, the cases observed in the "Content and Coverage" section show Southeastern digital archives more often than those from the Northern or Northeastern scene. However, this is not a deliberate choice and the inequality of access to digital tools is a research subject itself, demanding a more focused discussion.

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Content and Coverage

Roy Rosenzweig's pioneer study on Wikipedia claims that the platform should be assessed by its own criteria rather than by academic historical epistemological principles, however advanced they may be. Accordingly, the emphasis that the Wikipedia entries give to factual contents about the past rather than to the historical analysis or incorporation of perspectives of hitherto marginalized actors is not a sign of "outdated" or "obsolete" historiographical concepts, but evidence of what Rosenzweig interpreted as "popular history poetics." The same applies to digital informal archives, since the variety of subjects, the confusion between history and memory with a high level of nostalgia, and the proliferation of several formats stressing a visual approach describe a "history poetics" that excels the mere classification of historical periods covered by documentation. As a result, a marginal and complex relationship with the historical discipline is established. It is usual, for instance, to see a rhetorical claim supporting the fact that such archives present stories which are not told by the scholarly historical practice nor taught in the classroom. This occurs not only with initiatives that collect the testimonies of disenfranchised people, such as Projeto Conte, oriented to members of the LGBTQ+ community in Brazil; it is also an argument used by sites that promote nationalist and hegemonic views of the Brazilian past. Despite their differences, one of the central tenets of digital informal archival practices is to bridge the gap between the historical past and contemporary experience. It is a way of "remediating the historical distance"—to put it in Mark Salber Phillips' terms.[20]

Among the analyzed digital informal archives in Brazil, there is a lot of attention channeled to national history. Even when not explicitly in the name of the page or group, the history of Brazil is what stands out in such archives. Some archives seek to distinguish content of interest by time period, highlighting the periods of Colonial Brazil (1500–1822), Empire (1822–1889), and First Republic (1889–1930). Others, however, do not present clear boundaries or established criteria on what is covered by the archive—especially in the case of online groups that count on members' voluntary collaboration.

The Facebook group O Passado do Brasil, with over fifty thousand members, describes itself as a "group of academic content on the history of Brazil," and plainly stresses its institutional independence: "although we are a group aimed at academic content, we are not associated with any university or academic institution." The group presents its interest in different topics of national history—with an emphasis on the discussion of "controversial topics, always respecting their historical nature." Likewise, the archive's independence is also asserted, insofar as it has no party or ideological affiliation—emphasizing its respect for differences and democracy. Though self-described as "critical and academic," this archive's items—and collaborators—are diverse to a degree that, on a single day, there are posts referring to the oldest cities in the country as well as posts about past celebrities, like former top models and actresses. This great variety of content reveals a popular form of history appreciation, which confounds the historical past and personal nostalgia.

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Another informal archiving initiative is brazil_imperial, which is similar to O Passado do Brasil in terms of content choice and number of followers, but with a more centered management and feed. This Instagram page is explicitly organized by "Professor @danieljorgefilho," a profile with similar content posts—which links to a YouTube channel composed of videos from the same thematic matrix. brazil_imperial has 3,914 collected items consisting of pictures of the Empire era in Brazil, attached to reference and explanation wording. Its content is diverse, as it also includes captures of historical paintings from the 19th century, such as portraits of personalities from the Brazilian Empire—like Dom Pedro I, Joaquim Nabuco, and André Rebouças. In such cases, posts are supported by informative texts on the portrayed personality and painting conditions.

Even though brazil_imperial is more uniform and organized, its operation is similar to that of O Passado do Brasil. Famous personalities, historical cities, and portraits of important "official history" characters are repeatedly included in such digital informal archives. For the creators of such archives, the fact that the obscure content is often overlooked by official archives is less important than having archival and curatorial independence to store and disclose content—regardless of whether it has already been done by official archives or not. These digital archives give rise to a reformulation of narratives about the official history, reinforcing their independence and competing with national history productions, especially textbooks; at the same time, they intend to present a content that is more appealing to users.

There is a continuing dispute over subjects such as archiving, memory management, and narratives of the past. The massive emergence of digital informal archives undermined the somewhat stable sovereignty and authority that state-owned archives—as well as personal archives of famous personalities—had in the 20th century, as it renewed tensions over the management of the past. For this reason, even subjects already consolidated in the national historical and archival practice have been reimagined and reformulated in this regard. These kinds of digital informal archives make way for new places of narrative that are not residual or marginalized, but competitive to once sovereign traditional institutions. However, other informal archives do focus on collecting rather specific items attuned to a nostalgic and fragmented memory, consolidating their practice in the margin of official heritage institutions.

The Facebook group Novelas Antigas (brasileiras) consists of a digital archive of images, videos, among other "rare materials of great Brazilian television stars." The archive has over ninety thousand members and "only accepts [material from] soap operas dated from 20+ years ago," which makes it a quite specific archive that collects unusual memories not covered by official heritage institutions.

The Facebook page Ônibus Antigos do Rio de Janeiro is even more specific in its section of interest, describing itself as a "nonprofit page committed to preserve and increase the historical knowledge of the buses of Rio de Janeiro." This page has over fifteen thousand followers, and its visitors are given permission to contribute with content posts, resulting in the creation of an informal archive filled with pictures of buses from different historical moments of the city.

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Cases such as those are common in the Brazilian landscape of informal archives, which also includes topics such as architectural heritage (Casarões Antigos: Suas Histórias e Suas Relíquias) and trains (Memória do Trem, Memória Ferroviária de Pernambuco), for instance. All of them make way for new standpoints of memory articulation and narrative, covering subjects that are usually in the margin of official heritage archives or institutions. Starting from unclear or indefinite archival criteria evinced by the rather short descriptions of pages and groups (if any), important archives are created in a decentralized way, in order to cover specific topics left aside by the official memory institutions. The collection of Ônibus Antigos do Rio de Janeiro, for instance, constitutes a relevant—and virtually unprecedented—archive, paradigmatic of a social relationship with memory that is increasingly common.

Most Brazilian informal archives have digital collections based on images. All aforementioned examples, from national history archives to those with more specific approaches, have images as the most used document. As a matter of fact, in Brazil some of the most popular informal archives over the internet have titles that refer to this documentary category more than to the topic they address. This is the case of the Instagram page entitled historiaocultaphotos, with over 240 thousand followers and a collection of more than fifteen hundred images, whose purpose is to provide users with "the most interesting and curious pictures of the history of humanity." Likewise, the archive Imagens Históricas (historiaemimagens), also on Instagram, is meant to share "the rarest and most diverse pictures ever taken." The page has a collection of over 7,600 posts, and almost a million followers. For these two archives, image-based collections are at the heart of their curatorial purpose, while the content approach and the historical periods are secondary—unlike for the aforementioned examples. However, the purpose of being exceptional, different, and curious strongly inspires the creation of all these archives, once again tracing back to their marginal relationship toward the historical discipline—regardless of the obscure and diffuse way they do so, given the conceptual indetermination of these parameters.

However, not all Brazilian digital informal archives underpin their operation in image exploitation. Some initiatives count with more diversified collections and develop management terms—and do not have social networks as their main platforms of operation. Archives maintained by formally established organizations, such as the Instituto Museu da Pessoa and the Instituto São Paulo Antiga, as well as the Museu da Maré (linked to the namesake community in Rio de Janeiro), Salvador Escravista (organized by researchers from public universities in the Northeast), and Povos Indígenas do RN (dedicated to the indigenous communities of the state of Rio Grande do Norte), nurture digital collections whose time range covers more than a decade, with different types of documents—such as oral testimonies, images, and informative articles. All these cases propose the creation of heritage preservation conditions toward elements overlooked —and even excluded—by the official history and memory institutions.

The Museu da Pessoa, aligned with the practice of oral history, intends to care for the life story of ordinary people. It has over twenty thousand testimonies and sixty thousand pictures in its archive, which has been operating over twenty-seven years. The Museu da Maré consists of a collaborative archive by residents of the Complexo da Maré urban slums, in Rio de Janeiro. It is a distinctive case of a residual archive from a historically marginalized social place in the urban formation of one of the largest major cities in Brazil. The Instituto São Paulo Antiga formalized,

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in 2019, the ten-year experience of an independent iconographic memory archive focused on changes in the urban landscape of the city of São Paulo, establishing a heritage preservation institute at the margins of—and mostly criticizing—the official agencies.

Salvador Escravista debates the memory of slavery in Salvador, the city which received the second largest number of slaves admitted into America. The archive includes biographies and iconographic documents about important agents in the history of slavery in the city, as well as an interactive map of memory locations in Salvador—powered by the Esri organization. Povos Indígenas do RN has also taken a sort of minority's identity approach, as it constitutes a digital collection that goes from encyclopedic-like entries about the seven indigenous people who live in the state of Rio Grande do Norte to photos and poems made by the communities. Like the Salvador Escravista archive, Povos Indígenas do RN also has an interactive map, but it is linked to Google Maps. Both Salvador Escravista and Povos Indígenas do RN are organized by humanist researchers and have the support of large public universities, which conflicts with their definitions of themselves as "informal archives." However, both of them aim to preserve residual traces of marginalized social groups, with autonomy and unclear criteria on the composition of their digital collections, which makes them part of the Brazilian landscape of informal digital archives.

These initiatives, underpinned in clearer parameters and managed by consolidated organizations, structure their collections on original pages detached from social networks and hence protected from the migration they provoke from time to time. As a result, these experiences move toward the definition of more sophisticated archival parameters, establishing clearer criteria for documentary storage and organization, in addition to developing more independent search tools and display interfaces. Thus, these archives occupy the threshold between formal and informal archives. Even though they address memories often overlooked by the historical discipline, these initiatives differ from those operating on social networks, as they are set apart by an evident functional eclecticism and uncertainty concerning their archival criteria.

The landscape of digital informal archives in Brazil is extremely diverse and scarcely explored from a theoretical standpoint. However, these archives' content, reach, and popularity show the relevance of this online memory management model for the contemporary heritage landscape. At their own discretion, these initiatives show the different ways in which individuals and groups interpret archives, the role of memory, and the meaning of "history." Nonetheless, the creation of concepts and theoretical tools capable of supporting the study of these elements is still far from being a topic of concern by most historians.

Future Directions for Further Research

Internet-based memories and popular apprehensions of history are the subject of different areas of study. Alison Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory" and Jerome de Groot's attention to the way the public "consumes" history are contained under the umbrella of "popular history" and constitute examples of works in such areas.[21] The changes in archival practice are already a well-established field of study, but works such as those by Gabriella Giannachi or Wolfgang Ernst

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make novel claims regarding the relation between archival practices and digital technologies. It is also worth mentioning the fields of digital history and oral history, which have developed further reflections about the impact of digital media regarding the social circulation of the historical past. That is to say that digital informal archives are at the confluence of archival practices, new media studies, and popular understandings of historical knowledge.

Despite the relevance of this confluence, it has been undertheorized in historical practice, which risks obscuring or overlooking these initiatives. To help stimulate further research, a threefold typology based on the material gathered is outlined here. The typology is not specific to platforms or digital technologies; it rather seeks to apprehend the deeper connections between archival practices, the use of new media, and the relationship that these projects establish with the historical past.

First, there are competitive archival sites regarding scholarly or classroom accounts of Brazilian history. These initiatives are concerned with establishing a direct competition with the archiving methods and narratives of traditional institutions—such as state-owned archives. Also, they claim for themselves the concept of "history," boast their independence to address controversial topics, and do not hesitate to reformulate narratives about classic topics relating to the history of Brazil. These digital informal archives indicate the competitive character involved in their constitution, placing an emphasis on facts, events, and historical personalities, which consists of one of the most long-lasting characteristics of the "popular history poetics," according to Roy Rosenzweig. Such initiatives are usually conservative in terms of historical writing and often openly nationalist, leaning toward right-wing politics, whereas others are motivated by the plain desire to make the Brazilian past more well known. Among the highlighted examples, O Passado do Brasil and brazil_imperial illustrate this category.

Another type of digital informal archive places its interest in managing specific topics, showing an antiquarian approach of the past that often has no room in traditional historical archives, but is a mainstay in heritage practice. These nostalgia-based initiatives look back upon common memories of places, companies, or associations. In addition to the memories of neighborhoods and cities, the archive comprises those elements that no longer exist in the urban landscape, such as stores and means of transportation, television products, publications, and so on, which reveal an appropriation of history not as a process, but as materiality and life experience. While the first category uses "history" as key to understanding, with vernacular variations and disputes with the academic historiography or disciplinary parameters of state-owned archives, the second is characterized by its antiquarian approach to the past and its concentration on memory, even in the title of the initiatives.

A third group of digital informal archives is characterized by their interest in recovering and preserving overlooked memories. The establishment of such archives is not uniform, insofar as there are initiatives linked to traditional institutions such as universities, as well as initiatives run by independent civil society organizations, like associations, NGOs, or institutes. In such cases, however, the archiving practice is marked by the emphasis on resistance, the reflection on the restraints of traditional archiving practices, and the attempt to add new voices to the historical record. Accordingly, these initiatives inhabit the fine line between formal and informal archives,

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as they deploy more developed and consolidated archival criteria. Based on techniques such as the crowdfunding of memories to build collections, or the alignment with oral history practices, these archives, even though informal, differ from those diffusely established over the internet. These initiatives show new methods of archiving enabled by digital technologies and/or as a result of a network of players and collaborators that, although previously organized, found in these digital technologies a way to accomplish their memory proposals. In the Brazilian context, the Museu da Pessoa is paradigmatic of this category.

A subdivision of these projects could be said to lie in the relationship between university-based projects and the intent to gather and preserve testimonies related to historical events or memories from disenfranchised communities. These projects, as stated in the "Structure, Organization, and Supporters of Digital Informal Archives in Brazil" section, became more numerous during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it became increasingly evident that there was a disconnection between the Brazilian official responses toward the pandemic and the necessity to preserve and give a human face to the number of victims affected by this official neglect.[22]

Despite their differences, digital informal archives share an outlook of tension and dispute concerning the narratives of the past. Digital informal archives are self-described as platforms for the creation of collections that are not only marginalized, but complementary or even opposed to previously established heritage, archival, and historiographical instances. These archives, though they are private, configure an ideological dispute in the public sphere. This tension may be observed in demonstrations, whether by marginalized communities, civil society organizations, or groups scarcely represented by traditional institutions. Even so, all these initiatives present the same urge to endure and create instances of discussion and political empowerment regarding the establishment of criteria, the custody of the remains of the past, and the interpretation of such elements.

Auerbach's definition that informal archives are marked by a diffuse storage of what is overlooked by official archives also applies to digital informal archives. However, the mapping of experiences within this archiving method in Brazil shows that these archives are more than marginalized, insofar as they compete with state-owned archives. This political aspect illustrates the contemporary archival and heritage landscape and helps to understand and distinguish constitutive aspects of the historical imaginary within the digital realm. Besides, it sheds some light on sensitive points such as the lack of credibility and effectiveness of traditional places of knowledge construction over the internet.

Lastly, future research depends on the historians' attention to how memory and history are approached on the internet. This aspect describes the challenge of approaching the internet as a historical object, bearing in mind its great reach, volatility, and ephemeral nature.[23] The research on online memory will depend on the capacity to preserve documents, including the users' interaction over disclosed records, so as to overcome the trend of erasing memories and vernacular archiving initiatives. The Brazilian case serves as an example, for the succession of digital platforms—such as Orkut's replacement by Facebook—has resulted in the loss of a set of initiatives erased after a mere bureaucratic decision by Google, evincing the proprietary character of social networks.

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Any survey regarding digital informal archiving initiatives will be descriptive of its specific moment in time. This survey from 2020 brings significantly different results from the possibilities available in 2010; just like a future survey made in 2030 will reveal an equally diverse landscape. The typology presented is expected to serve as a map for future researchers to navigate through the uncertain waters of digital informal archives.

Acknowledgment

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Links to Digital Materials

Brazilian digital repositories

Biblioteca Brasiliana Digital *<https://www.bbm.usp.br/pt-br/>*.

Biblioteca Nacional Digital *<https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/>*.

Online memory initiatives—Institutions and projects

Instituto São Paulo Antigo *<https://www.saopauloantiga.com.br/>*.

Museu da Pessoa *<https://museudapessoa.org/>*.

Rio Memórias *<https://www.instagram.com/riomemorias/>*.

Salvador Escravista *<https://www.salvadorescravista.com/mapa>*.

Povos Indígenas do RN *<https://cchla.ufrn.br/povosindigenasdorn/index.html>*.

Online memory initiatives—Informal archives and groups maintained by amateurs

Memória do Trem e dos Bondes do Brasil *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tremhistoria/>*.

Memória do Trem *<https://www.facebook.com/memoriadotrem/>*.

Recife de Antigamente *<https://www.facebook.com/recantigo/>*.

Fotos Antigas da Embratel *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/300250443385507/>*.

Fotos Antigas de Belo Horizonte *<https://www.facebook.com/FotosAntigasDeBeloHorizonte/>*.

Fotos antigas da cidade de Belo Horizonte *<https://www.facebook.com/fotosantigasbh/>*.

Acervo virtual de fotos antigas do Boqueirão *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/287823545691213/>*.

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Casarões Antigos: Suas Histórias e Suas Relíquias *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1809125019401244/>*.

AMO SP—Fotos Antigas e Histórias de Nossa São Paulo *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/amo8sp8fotos8antigas8e8historias8de8nossa8sao8paul/>*.

Fotos antigas da cidade de São Paulo *<https://www.facebook.com/Fotos-antigas-da-cidade-de-S%252525C3%252525A3o-Paulo-200267820006940/>*.

Acervo Fotos Antigas São Paulo *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/acervosaopauloantigo/?ref=search>*.

PAULISTA—História & Memória *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/451873878316143/>*.

Memórias Paulistanas—Histórias Paulistanas *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/memoriaspaulistanas/>*.

Memória Paulista—Fotos antigas de São Paulo e suas cidades *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/memoriaspaulistas/>*.

História do Rio—Fatos e fotos de um passado maravilhoso *<https://www.facebook.com/HistoriaDoRio/?ref=br_rs>*.

Antigamente em Curitiba *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/417557358409468/?ref=group_header>*.

Rio Antigo *<https://www.instagram.com/rioantigo/>*.

O Rio Que Não Vi *<https://www.instagram.com/orioquenaovivi/>*.

Rio Casas e Predios Antigos *<https://www.instagram.com/riocasasepredіosantigos/>*.

Lembranças do Rio *<https://www.instagram.com/lembrancas_do_rio/>*.

Nichteroy no Passado *<https://www.instagram.com/nictheroynopassado/>*.

História Capixaba *<https://www.instagram.com/historia.capixaba/>*.

Tucuruvi Antiga *<https://www.facebook.com/tucuruviantiga/>*.

Histórias do Rio de Janeiro e do Brasil *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/vocegostadehistoria/>*.

Rio de Janeiro de Outrora! *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/riodeoutrora/>*.

História e Patrimônio Histórico do Rio de Janeiro *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/historiarj/>*.

Conheça a História do Rio de Janeiro *<https://www.facebook.com/ConhecaAMemoriaEAHistoriaDoRioDeJaneiro/?ref=search&__tn__=%2525252Cd%2525252CP-R&eid=ARB_Q1W7iEWJ9LYowmbqOeu1Lm5QYMqKqLu3R-p6pH0bQMRfhPFmw0enIvptt1D-60MieehcKT5wy9gS>*.

Fotos Antigas do Rio de Janeiro *<https://www.facebook.com/fotosantigasdoriodejaneiro/>*.

Memórias do Subúrbio Carioca *<https://www.facebook.com/riosuburbio/%3Fbusiness_id=10152592499697447>*.

Porto Alegre (Fotos Antigas) *<https://www.facebook.com/OldPortoAlegre/>*.

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Ônibus Antigos do Rio de Janeiro *<https://www.facebook.com/OnibusAntigosRio/?eid=ARDkkNHZJU4x7bzkd2kAXYZ7vJWThaDA0qUVSwZEzPhs-EDwfWo6n7ygBJxqbrTCgn3a0maYzaAXm7YY>*.

Memória Ferroviária de Pernambuco *<https://www.instagram.com/projeto_memoria_ferroviaria_pe/?igshid=13iatmlxx3dis>*.

Memorial Lagarto *<https://www.instagram.com/memorial_lagarto/?igshid=1uwfdd0v2z618>*.

Nostalgia—Media and online reproduction

Velhos Tempos *<https://www.facebook.com/MeusVelhosTempos/>*.

Nostalgicamente Falando *<https://www.facebook.com/nostalgicamentefalandooficial/>*.

Infância Anos 80, 90 *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/infanciadosanos80/>*.

Grupo Nostalgia Anos 70 80 90 *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/998633316908385/about/>*.

Anos 80 90 Nostalgia *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/237619270394346/>*.

Novelas Antigas *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/337628586870958/about/>*.

Revistas Brasileiras Antigas—Memória *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/revistasbr/>*.

Iconographic content on Brazil and general history

História do Brasil em Imagens *<https://www.facebook.com/historiadobrasilemimagens/>*.

Iconografia da História *<https://www.facebook.com/iconografiadahistoriaoficial/?ref=br_rs>*.

História Oculta Photos *<https://www.instagram.com/historiaocultaphotos/>*.

brazilian_imperial *<https://www.instagram.com/brazilian_imperial/>*.

Fotografias do Império *<https://www.instagram.com/fotografiasdoimperio/>*.

Imagens Históricas *<https://www.instagram.com/historiaemimagens/>*.

Imagens & História 3.0 *<https://www.instagram.com/imagens.historia/>*.

A história do mundo em imagens *<https://www.instagram.com/historiocracia/>*.

HISTÓRIA EM IMAGENS *<https://www.instagram.com/historia_em_imagenss/>*.

A história em imagens *<https://www.instagram.com/historizandoimagens/>*.

História em Photo *<https://www.instagram.com/historiaemphoto/>*.

Marginalized memories and views overlooked by the official history

O Brasil e Suas Memórias *<https://www.facebook.com/osbrasisesuasmemorias/>*.

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Memorial da Democracia *<https://www.facebook.com/MemorialDaDemocraciaBrasil/>*.

Memória Rocinha *<https://www.instagram.com/memoriarocinha/>*.

Cultne *<http://www.cultne.com.br/>*.

Projeto Conte *<https://projetoconte.com/>*.

Salvador Escravista *<https://www.salvadorescravista.com/mapa>*.

Povos Indígenas do RN *<https://cchla.ufrn.br/povosindigenasdorn/index.html>*.

Initiatives on the history of Brazil

O Passado do Brasil *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/605757773589245/?ref=search>*.

E o Brasil era assim *<https://www.facebook.com/eobrasileraassim/>*.

Historiando com Imagem *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2141808759184548/>*.

Historiando *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/190300614983620/>*.

História do Brasil—Colônia e Império *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1221254584628596/>*.

Monarquia Imperial—História do Brasil Império *<https://www.facebook.com/Monarquia-Imperial-Hist%252525C3%252525B3ria-do-Brasil-Imp%252525C3%252525A9rio-1734953056729772/>*.

História do Brasil (1) *<https://www.facebook.com/historiadobr/>*.

História do Brasil (2) *<https://www.facebook.com/groups/139708840082450/>*.

História do Brasil (3) *<https://www.facebook.com/Hist%252525C3%252525B3ria-do-Brasil-125881254778608/?ref=br_rs>*.

História do Brasil (4) *<https://www.facebook.com/historiaverdadeiradobrasil/?eid=ARBuT3v29RGcEICEIk7SP6vbP6OXQJGReFeT97EcKfq7jeLNTL9_S-T1Xm6h5RsKGAf7GjTgfz8n6Qmn>*.

Acervo do Conhecimento Histórico *<https://www.facebook.com/acervoconhecimentohistorico/?ref=br_rs>*.

História do Brasil Republicano, 1889–1934 *<https://www.facebook.com/primeirarepublicadobrasil/>*

História do Brasil—Nossa Nação *<https://www.facebook.com/Historiadobrasilbr/>*.

História do Brasil e Geral *<https://www.facebook.com/HISTORIAGERALBRASIL/>*

História do Brasil Net *<https://www.facebook.com/historiadobrasil.net/>*.

História do Brasil (1) *<https://www.facebook.com/Hist%252525C3%252525B3ria-do-Brasil-825664700902230/?eid=ARBrMRN7HW9ft55tOXFT5WS_daH--gy0eluvlB35l22iTaA2xWO7M7ve26P34Q2PKDl9ZQzWyjliLx2->*.

História do Brasil (2) *<https://www.facebook.com/Historia-Do-Brasil-1791122471143260/>*.

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História do Brasil e História Geral <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1415744515105668/>.

História e Memória do Brasil Republicano <https://www.facebook.com/historiaememoria2020/>.

Memorial da História do Brasil <https://www.facebook.com/MemorialDaHistoriaDoBrasil/>.

História Oculta <https://www.instagram.com/historiaoculta/>.

A História do Brazil Colonial <https://www.instagram.com/ahistoriadobrazilcolonial/>.

Temas da História <https://www.instagram.com/temasdahistoria/>.

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