

Ethical Data Sharing in the Digital Archives Space

An Enterprise Perspective

23 October 2025

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Working with and Managing Sensitive Research Data

N8 CIR

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My First Encounter with This Topic



The Field Museum
Chicago, IL, USA
2021

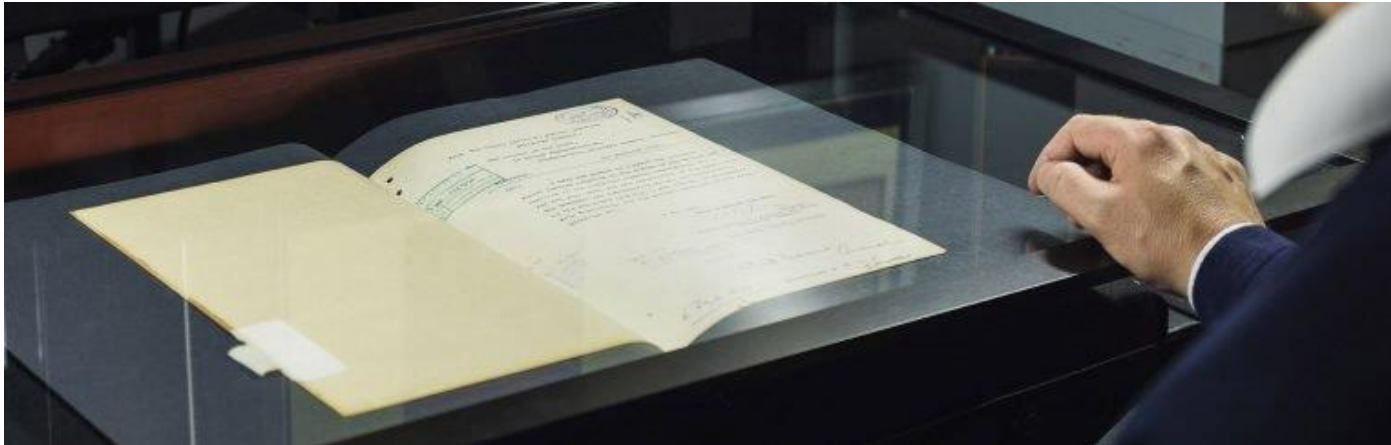
Old Native American Hall



Native Truths: Our Voices, Our Stories (2021)



So what does this have to do with data?



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “COLLECTIONS AS DATA” (CAD)? BY CORY LAMPERT & EMILY LAPWORTH

Data Sharing: The Case for Collections

Findable

Accessible

Interoperable

Reusable



Collective benefit

Authority to control

Responsibility

Ethics

“The museum has already begun to de-install cases, and when I first saw those empty cases it was a huge relief, knowing that those pieces are now going to be handled with **care**.”

Chris Pappan, Kanza Artist

Implementing CARE

"Assessing the FAIR-ness of a data set is typically a technical exercise which can be done independently by the researcher to prepare the final data set for reuse. On the other hand, the CARE Principles require engagement with people to address the cultural, ethical, legal, and social dimensions associated with the intended uses of the dataset" (p. 5).

Russo Carroll, "Operationalizing the CARE principles," 2021.

The Crying Child

•"Digitization has come with critiques of power, bias, and legitimacy, since the institutional drive to reproduce the excessive scale of the colonial project as big data enacts its own forms of erasure." (p. 294).

•Odumosu, "The Crying Child," 2020.

The Crying Child

On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and
Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons

Temi Odumosu

This article sketches key concerns surrounding the digital reproduction of enslaved and colonized subjects held in cultural heritage collections. It centralizes one photograph of a crying Afro-Caribbean child from St. Croix, housed in the Royal Danish Library, to demonstrate the unresolved ethical matters present in retrospective attempts to visualize colonialism. Working with affect and haunting as research material, the inquiry questions how museums and other cultural heritage institutions are caretaking historical violations, identifying themselves as hosting agents, and navigating issues of trust and accountability as they make their colonial collections available online. Speculating about what an ethics of care in representation could look like, the article draws on reparatory artistic engagements with such imagery and proposes how metadata could be rebought as a cataloging space with the potential to alter historical imbalances of power.

Why risk the contamination involved in restating the maledictions, obscenities, columns of losses and gains, and measures of value by which captive lives were inscribed and extinguished? Why subject the dead to new dangers and to a second order of violence? Or are the merchant's words the bridge to the dead or the scriptural tombs in which they await us? ("Venus in Two Acts," Saidiya V. Hartman, 2008)

While researching I become part of your army of ghosts, Haunting, Haunting, (Unearthing, In Conversation, Belinda Kazeem-Kamufiski)

This article is concerned with how we attend to the dead represented in the open digital commons, those ancestors glimpsed in code, through substitute JPEGs and TIFF files. It considers how we welcome people into mindful encounters with representations of enslavement and colonization and how we guide people overall in the use and circulation of sensitive visual material. By "we" I refer to those of us doing the work of historical and cultural narration and caretaking, but I am also addressing our students as well. To borrow the words of Susan A. Crane in the context of Holocaust atrocity, I "want to highlight the ethical torque of knowing the [slavery or colonial] past through images for anyone who is historically conscious, and from that consciousness propose alternative responses" (Crane 2008:310). What is presented here, then, is a series of expanded reflections that draw on my art historical background researching African people and imagined types in early modern European art and also my current work on colonial archives and the performance of memory in Scandinavia. This experience is the window through which I delineate a speculative ethics of care in collections that is concerned with

"emotional justice," as Marika Cifor describes it: "framing records as repositories of affect" and then appeasing them (working with, describing, and sharing them) as such (Cifor 2016:14). Responding to the delicate questions posed by Saidiya Hartman in her seminal essay "Venus in Two Acts," the whole discussion negotiates tensions surrounding access to representations and visibility of enslaved or colonized peoples, as they intersect with community needs for historical recognition, cultural ownership, and healing (Hartman 2008).

Critical thinking about the effects of digitization on cultural heritage politics, practices, and values is not new. In 1981 P. Gerald Ham called on the archive community to take seriously how technology was ushering in a new "postcustodial" era, which required the profession to reconsider its inherited roles and self-understanding as special gatekeepers of history (Ham 1981). Decentralization and mobility of information, datafication of culture, and negotiation of collaborative knowledge production are the ongoing concerns that have surrounded transformations in collections management systems. Ross Parry's invocation of the term "rescripting" in *Recording the Museum* adequately describes what has been required along the computational and conceptual road to handle fundamental issues of trust and ownership central to what it means to be an institution (Cameron and Kenderline 2010 [2007]; Parry 2008:82).

L. A quotation from the artwork Belinda Kazeem-Kamufiski, *Unearthing: In Conversation*, 2017, video, duration 13:00 minutes.

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Digital Preservation Southampton: Who We Are

- An enterprise unit housed at the University of Southampton Digital Humanities.
- We provide bespoke, flexible digital preservation training, consultancy, and data recovery for organisations in all sectors, empowering them to safeguard their collections into the future.
- A team of dedicated experts and educators with strong partnerships in the sector who aspire to help organisations through low-cost solutions to digital preservation challenges, while supporting skills development in the field.

DPS Work: Providing Access to Sensitive Digital Cultural Materials

[Research](#)[Learn](#)[News and opinion](#)[Work v](#)[Events](#)[Explore Research](#)[ACTIVE](#)

Middle East People's Culture Conservation Collective

[Overview](#)[Recent Work](#)[People](#)[Partners](#)[Funders](#)

Against the backdrop of a mass exodus of religious minorities from the Middle East, there is an urgency to empower youth from the communities left behind to find opportunities for professional development and income generation through the preservation of their heritage. With the breakdown in social relations caused by intense minority related forms of targeting in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, this project endeavours to contribute to social cohesion through the positive power of

Considerations:

- Issues of connectivity and bandwidth
- Light transfer solutions that do not compromise quality
- High price of hot cloud storage

Bespoke infrastructure:

- Gradated access
- Minimal computing



IDS File Browser

Minimal Computing

"While data reparations must be made, our interest here is (...) the development of present and future data sets, documents as data, and methods that promote **collaboration and interoperability** among colleagues around the world by not only taking into account uneven distribution of resources but also by ensuring that **control over the production of knowledge is in their hands.**"

Risam & Gil, "The Questions of Minimal Computing," 2022

Digitising Colonial Ethnographic Photographs

- You've been asked to digitise a series of photographs taken by two sister anthropologists while travelling in Angola and Namibia in the 1930s.
- The goal is to make these photographs available to descendants and other users through a browsable, searchable repository.
- **However**, some of these images include problematic content, including naked bodies, dead people, and photographs taken from a colonial gaze.



**What would you
do?**

Considerations

- Images are going on the web, where they may be **flagged** for content.
- You have the **legal right** to digitise, share, and openly license.

Our Approach

- Thinking about responsibility
- Thinking about authority
- Thinking about collective benefit, so metadata online even if images not (indicating existence)
- Publishing our thought process alongside the data

<https://tinyurl.com/makingafricanconnections>

Photographs taken while staying with Tchiliwande

Item Set

Title Photographs taken while staying with Tchiliwande

Creator  Diana Powell-Cotton

Date 30 May to 2nd June 1937.

Items



Created ▾ Descending ▾ Sort

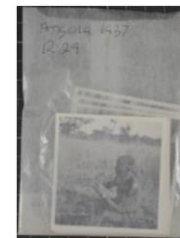
[Advanced search](#)

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Finished coil on arm

A young woman holds her arm up on her knee to show off the bracelet that has just



Tightening coil from wrist up

A close up of a man and woman sitting together on the ground while he tightens



Slipping coil on to girl's arm

A young woman sits on the ground holding out her arm to a man who is



Two girls standing in country watching

A young woman and a child stand in

Toolkit on Opening Up Digital Cultural Heritage Collections

R**Risk Management Toolkit**

Q Se

Risk Management Toolkit

Risk Area: Legal

Risk Area: Ethical

Risk Management Toolkit

Risk Mitigation in Open Access to Digital Cultural Heritage Collections

Thanks!

Questions?

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Website: <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/research/institutes-centres/digital-preservation-southampton>