CfP Workshop:
Postdigital Archives in Contemporary Literature:
(Counter-)Practices and New Challenges in (Digital) Memory

Organization: Anna-Lena Eick (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Johanna Vollmeyer (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, LEETHI) and Ulrike Mascher (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt) in cooperation with the Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform (FMSP)

Digital technologies have become so pervasive – or in Zara Dinnen's words "banal" (cf. Dinnen 2018) – that they no longer register as distinct from non-digital aspects of everyday life. This condition, described as "postdigital" (Cramer 2014; Jandrić et al. 2018), is best understood as an interwoven set of cultural shifts that followed the "computerization and global digital networking of communication, technical infrastructures, markets and geopolitics" (cf. Cramer 2014: 13) and likewise affects the epistemic areas of memory and archives. Archives have always been active technologies of governance that produce epistemic order and social hierarchies (Stoler 2009). The postdigital condition raises new questions concerning the archive and memory that cannot be separated from questions of digital infrastructure and mediascape.

While the archive was once conceived as a distinct institutional space governed by curators, selection criteria and access rules, digital infrastructures now distribute it across various platforms, servers, and formats. This undermines the authority that once determined what was preserved and what people were allowed to remember. This offers potential democratizing effects that challenge the archontic power of "traditional" custodians. However, digital platforms and, more recently, the advent and widespread adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) are undermining these effects. While AI transforms the archive into an increasingly generative environment that not only recombines traces of the past into new representations but also produces a synthetic past, digital platforms appropriate and extract value from our collective knowledge. Much of the digital infrastructure through which knowledge is produced, organized, stored, and accessed is controlled by a small number of private companies, primarily based in the United States and China, whose business models rely on the extraction and monetization of accumulated knowledge.

The logics governing these platforms differ from those of traditional archival gatekeepers: rather than relying primarily on institutional authority and curatorial selection, these platforms operate through algorithmic systems that determine what becomes visible, searchable, and ultimately preserved. Yet these systems do not necessarily challenge the biases embedded in existing knowledge structures; instead, they often reproduce and amplify them, while their opacity and limited traceability make it difficult to scrutinize or hold accountable the mechanisms through which knowledge is selected, classified, and transformed. This raises fundamental questions for archival and memory studies: How do our epistemological knowledge and memory change when the past is preserved and circulated in these new terms? How are archival traces stored, and what determines their inclusion in the archive? How is this information disseminated, and what impact does a synthetic past that was never encoded in human memory, but is instead stochastically produced, have on memory?

This workshop asks how archivization and cultural memory are changing under postdigital conditions that increasingly include generative AI systems. To this end, we turn to literature, which does not merely record shifts in media and archival practice but works through them, representing and highlighting what is otherwise habitual and invisible. By analyzing contemporary literature, we examine the evolving practices of archives and memory as manifested in literary texts. Drawing on postdigital theory (Cramer 2014; Thon 2025), media archaeology (Parikka 2012), memory studies (De Kosnik 2016; Badir/Baetens 2004), and critical archive theory (Derrida 1995; Ricœur 2004), we understand literary form as both a critical and epistemological practice. On the one hand, print fiction can imitate digital formats such as databases, feeds, chats, and metadata, while also exposing their material and ideological conditions; on the other, electronic

literature can directly interact with platforms, networks and generative AI systems and thereby leverage the affordances of the digital sphere. Contributions may therefore draw on contemporary print fiction, digital and generative literature, digital archives, archival interventions, and other forms of artistic and literary practice that engage with the changing conditions of memory and archivization. Possible questions include, but are not limited to:

- How can literary and artistic practices, in print, digital, and hybrid forms, represent the digital archive and its gaps, silences, and power asymmetries, and what becomes visible about the structures of the postdigital mediascape when these are transferred, rebuilt, or discussed in another medium?
- How does the use of digital tools, including generative AI, transform the concepts and practices of archives and cultural memory in the postdigital mediascape?
- What happens to concepts such as authenticity, testimony, evidence, and historical experience when generative systems produce representations of a past that no human being has experienced?
- How might postdigital and AI-mediated archives require us to rethink established theories of memory, mediation, and archival practice?
- Can non-digital artifacts and print literature create counter-archives – spaces that point to the opacity and incompleteness of (digital) archives, in opposition to the algorithmic legibility imposed on the past by the postdigital condition?
- How do generative systems inherit and reproduce the biases of digital and non-digital archives, such as gender inequalities and colonial hierarchies? And how can literary texts or art make these biases visible?

Confirmed Keynote Speaker: Prof. Dr. Erika Fülöp (Université Toulouse II Jean Jaurès)

Organizational Information:
The interdisciplinary workshop "Postdigital Archives in Contemporary Literature: (Counter-) Practices and New Challenges in (Digital) Memory" will take place on June 23, 2027, at Goethe University Frankfurt as part of the program of the *Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform* (FMSP). Proposals for 20-minute presentations from literary and media studies, cultural studies, memory and archival studies and related disciplines may be submitted by December 10, 2026, to: Anna-Lena.Eick@vub.be and johvollm@ucm.es. Abstracts should not exceed 500 words and must include brief biographical and bibliographical information. Notifications of acceptance will be sent in January 2027. The workshop language is English; a proceedings volume is planned.

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