Call for papers

Special issue of the journal Les Cahiers du Numérique on :

THE WEB, SOURCE AND ARCHIVE

(Ed. Laurence Favier, Emmanuelle Bermès, Marie-Madeleine Géroudet)

Presentation

Since the initiative of the Internet Archive Foundation, launched in 1996 in the United States, followed by that of the world's major libraries and various private and public organizations, researchers have had access to research materials derived from Web archiving. Although technical access, scope of coverage and copyright regimes remain disparate, these materials are indispensable for any research involving a contemporary history dimension. International networks, such as International Internet Preservation, Research Infrastructure for the Study of Archived Web Materials, and WarcNet, have been set up, testifying to the major interest in this type of collection.

Research into the history of the Web has been able to develop on new foundations (Gomes et al. 2014), and libraries are being solicited for partnerships with researchers. In France, the first partnerships with the Bibliothèque Nationale de France focused on the electoral Web (2007 and 2012 presidential elections) and then on "Le devenir en ligne du patrimoine numérisé : l'exemple de la Grande Guerre" (https://actions-recherche.bnf.fr/bnf/anirw3.nsf/IX01/A2013000460_le-devenir-du-patrimoine-numerise-en-ligne-l-exemple-de-la-grande-guerre). In spring 2022, the Datasprint organized by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as part of the ResPaDon project (https://respadon.hypotheses.org/) confirmed that the mobilization of web archives could be complementary to the study of the living web (Baneyx, Benhamou-Suesser, Moiraghi, 2022).

While researchers' interest in the Web as a source has been evident for a decade (Stirling et al. 2012), its effective building through archiving practices and exploitation remains a challenge. Yet it is only through these archiving practices that the web becomes a research corpus (Beaudouin, Pehlivan, 2016: 15). As a medium of ephemeral inscription of signs, codes and data that circulate through digital networks, the web as scientific material questions researchers as a source or field of research and questions information and documentation professionals as an archive. After a conference on this theme in April 2023 (https://respadon.hypotheses.org/1089), this issue aims to present contributions on the use of Web archives for research, showing how this dual aspect is put into practice. The presentation below outlines possible directions.

Articles may be written in either French or English, and should be between 40,000 and 50,000 characters long. They must not have already been published, even if they may have been shared at an oral conference. Each proposal will be double-blind reviewed by at least two reviewers from the Scientific Committee.

The expected papers will focus on the following themes related to the 3 main axes of the conference, described below. They could include :

- Presentations of scientific projects using web corpora and digital humanities
- Presentations of feedback from research projects using the web as a source : obstacles encountered, success stories
Reflections on professional and academic practices involving the collection and preservation of web-based data

Presentation of experiments and devices promoting access to digital archives and web corpora

Methodological and epistemological reflections on the needs of accessing and preserving online data in different disciplines.

Topics

Axis 1 The web at the intersection of memory and knowledge : epistemological issues

The web as a scientific field implies to consider the material available online as a deposit of traces of the collective memory. How to elaborate a scientific discourse from an essentially volatile source? What kind of memory is involved when it is "distributed" on the web? What is the status of web sources in the scientific practices that elaborate a new knowledge and contribute to the emergence of sciences henceforth assisted by the digital? The aim here is to collectively question the methods, modalities and status of the results produced when online data come into play in research, whatever the discipline concerned (contemporary history, political science, sociology, history of science, media studies, computer science...).

Approaches and proposals that illustrate scientific work using the Web and its traces as well as thoughts on the nature of archives and data used in contemporary scientific research will be appreciated.

Axis 2 Archival policies, practices, techniques and web archives : from document to corpus

For several years, the professional community has developed technical definitions of the digital archive and associated devices. This practice questions the notion of "archive places" and the preservation of corpora: the service offer around web archives must allow the emergence of the working field with researchers, taking into account various questioning:

- In terms of informational sovereignty, how does the diversity of existing private and public initiatives materialize in the policies for building archives?
- In terms of access to archives, what definition of granularity, unity of meaning, and coherence of the archival collection is needed to make web archives usable for research?
- How to develop efficient scientific practices while respecting the legal framework and the constraints related to the notion of legal deposit? How can we make this framework evolve to promote research?

To shed light on these issues, we could consider mobilizing the history of archiving or a comparative approach to international frameworks.

Axis 3 Relations between technical devices and scientific data : the networked web archive

A prospective approach to the study of web sources implies considering them not in isolation, but in relation to the different types of data and sources mobilized in the framework of the scientific process.
The methodological approaches that mobilize digital materials are plural. Trace analysis, network analysis, and data visualization (quantitative approaches) can be complemented by qualitative approaches in digital ethnography that seek to question the relationship between traces and users. In connection with the issues of research data, the practices of constitution of corpora by researchers can be based on archival know-how: life cycle of data, editorialization and documentation of sources, preservation of technical devices related to data, preservation of research data. We will focus here on the current legal and technical limits to the constitution of the web archive considered as an incomplete archive: the archiving of some object-limits involving technological interactivity (e.g. online video games, social networks, software) leads to question the documentary nature of the web. On the other hand, digital archiving technologies can be mobilized to collect and preserve documentary objects accessible online that are not usually considered as web archives (daily press, scientific articles). This axis will therefore focus on all the issues, methods and reflections that allow us to consider the web as a source and archive that is not isolated, but linked with other corpora and collections.

Timeline

Call for publications : 2023/11/13
Submission of manuscripts : 2024/02/15
Communication to authors of selected papers : 2024/03/18
Receipt of the final version: 2024/04/02
Publication : 2024/06
Texts should be e-mailed to: laurence.favier@univ-lille.fr, emmanuelle.bermes@chartes.psl.eu, marie-madeleine.geroudet@univ-lille.fr

Scientific Committee

- Laurence Favier, Professor, University of Lille
- Emmanuelle Bermès, Assistant Professor, Ecole nationale des Chartes, PSL
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- Ian Milligan, Professor, Associate Vice-President, Research Oversight and Analysis; co-editor of Internet Histories, University of Waterloo, Canada
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