The Art of Curation: Searching for Global Shakespeares in the Digital Archives

Christy Desmet, University of Georgia

Abstract

Scholarly sites devoted to global Shakespeare are strictly curated, usually by one or two persons with impeccable credentials. By contrast, YouTube, as the quintessential crowd-sourced and user-structured video archive, depends on individual contributions for its raw material, and on a combination of imitation, dialogue, and a complicated computer algorithm to establish relationships among the videos. This essay considers how differences in curation and context between these two kinds of archives might affect the understanding and reception of global Shakespeares. The paper compares cognitive and intellectual strategies brought to bear in the YouTube environment with the more structured methods of curating and providing intellectual paratexts in three sample scholarly archives: Bardbox, CASP (Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project; and the Global Shakespeares Video & Performance Archive (MIT).

Introduction

Increasingly, online archives are the medium through which students, teachers, and scholars gain access to the embarrassing riches of global Shakespeare. Digitization of physical materials has created a particular challenge for material archives. As Kate Dorney, a curator at the Victoria and Albert, writes, "the recent word in museums and libraries has been . . . large-scale digitization of material with minimal cataloging" (2010, 25). These "factory digitization projects," as they are called satirically, suggest that in the physical, as well as the digital archives, there is much work to be done to make properly documented artifacts accessible to a wide audience. While many of the conditions governing the construction of and access to archives are the same for material and digital projects, there are additional ones peculiar to digital media. Alexa Huang's ground-breaking account of the possibilities inherent in a digitized performance archive was positive: "Part archival record and part performance, digital video can register the theatrical contingency in a manipulable medium . . . that creates discursive knowledge about Shakespeare as site specific

performance" (Huang 2011a, 50. See also Huang 2011b). And while I think that her assessment has been largely borne out by the development of digitized Shakespeare archives, I want to "get under the hood" of the digital machine, so to speak, to get a further sense of how media, people, and material interact in these Shakespearean sites that offer so much to teachers and researchers.

In particular, curation is a central issue distinguishing crowd-sourced websites from scholarly archives. YouTube, as the quintessential crowd-sourced site for Shakespeare offerings of all kinds, is regulated but loose in terms of curation: anyone, anywhere, can upload any clip that they can lay their hands on and that catches their fancy — at least until YouTube removes it for copyright violation. Academically sponsored digital archives of global Shakespeare, by contrast, depend heavily on the presence of scholars whose expertise shapes the site. To explore the role of curation in the experience of global Shakespeare on digital sites, I will compare the experience of YouTube, as a crowd-sourced archive, with a range of more strictly curated sites: Bardbox; the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP); and the MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive.[1] In this way, I hope to define a little more precisely the affordances and constraints attending on the online archives upon which, increasingly, we depend for scholarly and pedagogical work.

Keywords

The online archive is a hybrid creature, located ambivalently within a spectrum of three organizational structures: the database, the archive, and the collection. The resources discussed here involve to some extent database structures and what Lev Manovich calls "database logic" to organize their artifacts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a database rather narrowly as "a structured set of data held in computer storage and typically accessed or manipulated by means of specialized software." In his article on the topic, Stephen Ramsay notes that the database is by no means new:

> The design of such systems has been a mainstay of humanistic endeavor for centuries; the seeds of the modern computerized database being fully evident in the many text-based taxonomies and indexing systems which have been developed since the Middle Ages. Whenever humanists have amassed enough information to make retrieval (or comprehensive understanding) cumbersome, technologists of whatever epoch have sought to put forth ideas about to represent that information in some more tractable form. (Ramsay 2004, 177)

Databases sort data, including some and excluding others; then they map "relationships among entities" (177) within the database. Rhetorically, in database design the sorting and separation of data entails a "certain estrangement from what is natural," but the establishment of rule-governed relationships between these atomized data bits has the beneficial effect of allowing "the serendipitous connection to come forth" (178).[2] This balance between estrangement and the forging of potentially surprising connections is useful to understanding Shakespearean databases and their related forms.

Lev Manovich, in a more sweeping theoretical gesture, defines the logic of database, in opposition to the logic of narrative, as *the* two central structures for processing information. In the age of new media and computer culture, he argues, the database, founded on the principle of an unordered list, now dominates over cause-and-effect narrative: "Many new media objects do not tell stories; they don't have a beginning or an end; in fact, they don't have any development, thematically, formally or otherwise, which would organize their elements into a sequence. Instead, they are collections of individual items, where every item has the same significance as any other" (Manovich 1999, 80). While he acknowledges the narrower, more technical definition, for Manovich the database is, quite broadly, a cultural form that "represents the world as a list of items, and refuses to order this list" (225). Thus, photo albums are databases, as are their digitized counterparts in various delivery media. "Virtual museums" are a form of new media database, and so is the World Wide Web itself.

For Manovich, the database/narrative dialectic maps onto a fundamental post-Saussurean linguistic structure, in which utterances engage along both a paradigmatic axis and a syntagmatic axis. Linguistic utterances forge largely causal relations through syntax (syntagmatic axis), while semantics relies on selection of words from a grammatically aligned set of possibilities (paradigmatic axis). In other words, you could substitute "cat" for "bat" in the sentence "The cat has escaped the house," but you could not substitute "svelte" for "bat" in that same sentence. When the syntagm dominates, narrative is privileged; when the paradigm dominates, database is privileged, and narrative is proportionately "dematerialized" (231). It is worth mentioning that some scholars, such as Jerome McGann, object to Manovich's elision between a "structured data set" and "collections of items."[3] But in the broad, metaphorical sense articulated by Manovich, all the sites discussed in this essay are databases and obey database logic in that separate objects (most typically, video clips) are collected in one space, but not in a defined order.

While the database, as a master metaphor for digitized scholarly resources, has its problems, the complementary concept of archive is subject to an even greater ideological debate among

humanist scholars. To return once more to a simple dictionary definition, an archive is at once the place where "public records or other important historic documents are kept" and the documents themselves (*OED*). Thus, the term elides the distinction between container and contained, the archive building and the documents housed within it. This paradox underlies Jacques Derrida's influential concept of "archive fever." From Derrida, we understand that an invisible power governs the archive, whose guardians regulate access and have the power to interpret its contents. From Derrida as well, we understand that an archive at once conserves and destroys, functioning as an agent of both historical memory and amnesia. What's in the archive is commemorated, what outside invisible, forgotten, even ruled out of existence. What is inside the archive is, paradoxically, also invisible, lost to living memory and discourse; only when removed from the archive and made public do the records, documents, and artifacts become history.[4] While the sites discussed in this essay are all open access, not hidden behind a pay wall or even requiring a password, the archive's subjection to the law (through its etymological link to "*arkhe*, the principle of the commandment" [Derrida 1995, 9]) remains pertinent in that technical constraints, user access and bandwidth, and legal concerns all can influence what viewers get to see and know about digitized Shakespearean artifacts. Derrida's deconstructionist excursus into the archive also contributes to this discussion the helpful notion of the archive's necessarily incomplete state — its failure to perfect and stabilize memory — and therefore the importance of a supplemental context for its very existence. Explicitly referencing Derrida's notion of "archive fever," Peter Holland's (2010) exploration of the Shakespearean performance archive stresses the importance of process and performativity to the ongoing creation of archives as art works; and Barbara Hodgdon's (2016) elegant analyses of theatrical "leftovers," from promptbooks to rehearsal photographs, demonstrate not only the necessarily incomplete nature of theater archives, but also the need, especially in the case of the photographs and other visual evidence, for supplementary writing to complete or even compensate for the work of memory.

Finally, there is the collection. The *OED* tells us, rather unhelpfully, that a collection is "a number of objects collected or gathered together, viewed as a whole; a group of things collected and arranged." Like Manovich's database, these objects are discrete, but they are organized and "arranged," and the collection as a whole seems self-sufficient, needing no extra contextualization. Within digital contexts, the collection's ephemerality can be exacerbated by changes in media, as Marcus Boon's charmingly tongue-in-cheek meditation on the "apparent destruction" of his MP3 collection demonstrates at length (Boon 2013). But the collection strives for self-sufficiency, clear

and consistent boundaries that mark what is in and what is outside it. As Susan Stewart writes in her theoretical exploration of the collection as a symptom of nostalgia, the "disease of longing,"

> the collection seeks a form of self-enclosure which is possible because of its ahistoricism. The collection replaces history with classification, with order beyond the realm of temporality. In the collection, time is not something to be restored to an origin; rather, all time is made simultaneous or synrchronous within the collection's world. (1984, 151)

As this quotation suggests, while the selection of objects might at first blush seem idiosyncratic — items picked up by the owner in the course of her peregrinations — in fact, narrative reigns supreme: collections "are objects generated by means of narrative," with syntagm dominating paradigm, to revert to Manovich's terms (1999). The collection, much more than the database and archive, presents itself as an "autonomous world — a world which is both full and singular, which has banished repetition and achieved authority" (152). The archetypal collection, as Stewart puts it, is Noah's ark — complete, without redundancy, severed from its origins and oriented to the future rather than the past. In this way, the collection rejects nostalgia, and in fact, erases the memory of its artifacts' origins. To some extent, collection is the least intellectually rigorous, or institutionally controlled of the three activities, but the most human. There must be an agent to collect and arrange objects; collections require collectors with curiosity and affect.

Of course, these terms are often enfolded into one another. Online archives and collections can be searched as databases. Collections may contribute to and be the foundation of archives. From this excursion into definition, however, I would extract four ideas: first, global Shakespeare sites are databases formed from discrete objects that can be manipulated in different arrangements; second, they are archives with hidden ideologies and power structures that are both masked and communicated through supplemental context; third, they demonstrate a tension between completeness and incompleteness, and between memory and forgetting; and fourth, at the heart of all of these sites is the figure of the collector or, more broadly, an impulse toward collection. When considering the effect of digital technologies in mediating viewers, readers, scholars, and cultural tourists' experience of global Shakespeare, it is useful to consider the interplay of these concepts within each given digital resource.

Site 1. MIT Global Shakespeare Video and Performance Archive

The MIT Global Shakespeare Video and Performance Archive is curated by Peter Donaldson and Alexa Alice Joubin, now in conjunction with an international team of collaborators at different sites. This is a scholarly resource, by scholars and teachers for scholars, teachers, and

students. With a "catalogue of more than 397 productions, 75 video clips, and online videos of over 30 full productions" (an accounting first accessed in 2014),[5] MIT Global Shakespeares has built a substantial database of videos that are catalogued with accurate and substantial metadata; searches by key word, Shakespeare play, language, and region are supported. Global Shakespeares aims specifically to be a collaborative resource, soliciting contributions from other scholars and providing opportunities for reader comments. The site also is committed to civic goals. According to the "About" page, "this archive is intended to promote *cross-cultural understanding* and serve as a core resource for students, teachers, and researchers. We invite you to participate in this international research and educational online community" (MIT Global Shakespeares 2017, emphasis in original). The metadata, collaborative ethos, and civic emphasis define this site as an archive, with all of the regulatory apparatus that goes with this label. At the same time, the core of the site is SPIA (Shakespeare Performance in Asia), which itself was based on the personal collection of Alexa Alice Joubin. Since I first consulted the archive in 2013 for an earlier presentation on this topic, the range of regional areas represented in the archive has grown steadily. Regions represented within the archive include the Arab World, East Asia, South and Southeast Asia, India, Brazil, Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America. Since 2017, there has also been a substantial and distinguished list of Regional Editors, as well as the traditional Advisory Board. The kinds of Resources housed at the site are catalogued in a recognizable way for scholars; there are Video Interviews; Scripts; Essays, Reviews, and Written Interviews; List of Theater Companies; Glossary; Bibliography; and Online Links. There is nothing surprising here, in that sites of this type grow over time, especially when they, like this one, solicit crowd-sourced contributions; and while there is a database of videos at the heart of this project, that database (or archive) is necessarily never completed and the shape of the website itself is conditioned by the contingencies attendant on voluntary contributions and other social factors. Alexa Alice Joubin writes:

> A challenge that we faced at MIT Global Shakespeares is the issue of copyright. While an increasing number of directors and theatre companies proactively donate their video materials to be hosted by our platform as part of their outreach effort, other companies subscribe to a different notion of liveness, investing in idea that their productions are valuable because they are ephemeral and not available in any other format beyond the performance on stage. Additionally, even though Global Shakespeares is an open-access non-profit educational project, some companies charge copyright fees. They are well within their right to do so, but some productions are priced out of reach for academics. In still

other instances, we have not been able to establish contact with some companies, and as a result their works are not represented. These factors lead to some form of what I call "archival silence." What is not there is as important as what is there or included. An archive — despite its encyclopedic impulse — is never complete and should not be treated as such. (Personal Communication 2017)

As is true of databases/archives generally, the systematic method of collection and mapping intersects with the more ad hoc nature of collections.[6]

Site 2. Canadian Appropriations of Shakespeare (CASP)

The brainchild of Daniel Fischlin of Guelph University, CASP represents itself as a "systematic exploration and documentation of the ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted into a *national*, *multicultural* theatrical practice" (Canadian Adaptations 2017, emphasis added). The site's structure differentiates the database explicitly from the rest of its material, which includes bibliography, essays, interviews, multimedia, teacher resources, and more. This self-named "project" is also an archive with ambitions toward historical, geographical, and political inclusiveness; as the front page proclaims, "CASP is the first research project of its kind devoted to the systematic exploration and documentation of the ways in which Shakespeare has been adapted into a national, multicultural theatrical practice" (Canadian Adaptations 2017). Here, as in the MIT Global Shakespeares, the regional is also global. This statement is something of a paradox. Discussions of Shakespeare's global or intercultural potential are obviated or made more contingent in the case of digital archives. For instance, Sonia Massai's suggestion that for performed drama the distinction between local and global Shakespeares can be defined by a production's intended audience — Shakespeare for local, national, and international audiences — does not hold up in the case of a digital archive (Massai 2005), where liveness or a site-specific setting are not in play.[7] In many ways, the internal organization of both MIT Global Shakespeares and Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project, such as the metadata recorded for the artifacts — the categories chosen to organize the site and connect entries — and even the physical layout of their interfaces and the construction of their search engines (more on the role of interface, below) — make the regional perspective within the global and the global context that structures a variety of local, regional Shakespeares visibly noticeable to users who navigate the site.[8]

The Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare "project," while best defined as a digital archive built upon a database, also bears the stamp of its originators' personal perceptions and goals, which makes it more like a collection. In a 2010 interview archived on the CASP website, Fischlin talks

about the origins of the project, which was fueled by frustration at how few works could be included in his and Mark Fortier's 2000 print volume from Routledge, *Adaptations of Shakespeare* (2000). The website aimed to exploit digital technologies to make available additional materials that the project had brought to light: "The digital commons we had created was pearl diving in a much bigger sea of information and research we had uncovered . . . We were relying on our own instincts in a way as in, 'We think we need more information on French Canada; we think we need more information on queer adaptations; and what about all those musical adaptations of Shakespeare in Canadian pop culture?'" (Fischlin 2017). Thus, the database and archive are, in effect, reliant on the ethos of its creators — their assessment of what is missing and what we need more of — revealing the lingering shadow of the collection at the foundation of this project. Finally, CASP has the civic emphasis that characterizes archives: for instance, there is a "Learning Commons" aimed at secondary school teachers and the online game 'Speare, directed at what Fischlin, in the interview, identified as a "surprise constituency" that flocked to CASP: Canadian teenagers. Between 2014 and 2017, when I began and finished this study, the site has continued to grow and develop, and although there is no mechanism for direct contributions, as there is in the MIT Global Shakespeares site, the "Contact Us" page invites interactions with users: "Please feel free to email CASP with any questions or comments concerning Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare or the website. We would love to hear about adaptations not yet recorded in the database and we are constantly seeking additional information pertinent to the site. Also, we invite critical and constructive commentary on any part of the site you may have visited" (Canadian Adaptations 2017). CASP, although now more thoroughly institutionalized, is at heart a collection from an impassioned connoisseur.

Site 3. BardBox

So far, we have an intercultural Shakespeare archive and a national Shakespeare archive, both of which are driven by database logic. Luke McKernan's BardBox, built on a simple Wordpress blog, is more properly a collection, introducing in simple sequence examples that the blogger finds artistically meritorious, representative of a particular genre, or simply interesting. Whitney Trettien defines it as a "new kind of online archive: a loosely-cataloged, feed-syndicated collection that continues to grow" (Trettien 2010, para. 21). The videos are classified in a rather heterogeneous manner as "adaptations, animals, animation, etc." Even more than in the first two sites, BardBox has ample paratext that provides not just production information or metadata, but a more extensive and chatty critical context for and evaluation of the selected videos. As Sylvia Morris says, "No need to wade through endless people awkwardly intoning one of Shakespeare's famous speeches.

He's done all the sifting for you and you know that anything he's chosen is worth the time it takes to look at it" (2012). Take, for example, this assessment of a rap video:

> There are plenty of Shakespeare raps out there, mostly performed with a snigger by American high school students and not telling us a great deal beyond the realisation that fashion does not necessarily equate with relevance. But this looks and sounds like the real deal. Made by a Los Angeles video production company, it has all the moves, poses (guns pointed at the camera), flash style (DeLorean car), clothes and locations (sunny Los Angeles with the Hollywood sign in the background), plus a fine music track. But then the words reveal that what is being played out is the relationship between Hamlet and Horatio, and not in any superficial manner but one in which real psychological dilemma is displayed through poetry. The text for the rap is helpfully given with the video: — H for the Rizzo 2009. (BardBox 2017)

This was the more expansive account that accompanied the video in 2014. In 2017, when I found the video in McKernan's list of top ten videos, the blurb reads more succinctly: "Fantastic rendition of Hamlet from Horatio's point of view, told as a California-based hip-hop number that looks and sounds like the real deal" (BardBox 2017). As the video was "promoted" on the BardBox site, its description became more succinct and less personal. As a comment on the relationship between YouTube and other archives, this same clip is available at the MIT Global Shakespeares site. It is unclear whether or not the YouTube example is pirated from MIT Global Shakespeares.

In contrast to the previous examples, here the figure of the collector himself is foregrounded, and he has a definite personality and a set of criteria that has emerged during the lifespan of the site. As McKernan's vocabulary suggests, his methodology is Arnoldian — a search for touchstones of greatness — and his critical sensibility is at once Romantic (valuing originality and authentic psychological drama) and modernist (deriving from high culture and favoring novelty, complexity, and technical polish). Unlike the classic collection but like archives, BardBox is plagued by incompleteness, which occurs when videos featured on the site are removed by the creators. McKernan keeps a separate section called "Alas, Alas" to document videos that are no longer available, a commemorative supplement to the Derridean archive that erases memory in the act of preserving its artifacts.

Curation

So far, I have stressed the taxonomic differences among these sites, which can easily be deconstructed to show slippage within those categories. In particular, as I was working on the

essay, I became aware of how the collection is the doppelganger of its more systematic cousin, the archive, and that the logic of collection is both the origin and the terminus ad quem for both archive and database. Collecting is the foundational impulse underlying all three forms, with the function of curation becoming the basis for the generic distinctions among them. For this reason, it is important to understand how curation — the process that gives value and authority to archives and also shapes how we access, experience, and understand global Shakespeare through digital archives — actually works.

Take the collection: from a commonsense point of view, a collection bears the stamp of its human source. But the collection, in Susan Stewart's classically Derridean definition, is actually a self-perpetuating system with its own essentially linguistic logic that, like Derrida's archive, is rooted in a tension between conservation and destruction. What is destroyed in the creation of a collection, Stewart says, is context. To some extent, Stewart's collection is beginning to look like Manovich's database, a loose, non-hierarchical collocation of objects. But while we tend to look at a database as a neutral structure, the collection is motivated by aesthetic criteria that are nonetheless ideological. Under the banner of aestheticism, "the collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context" (Stewart 1984, 151). This formulation describes pretty well BardBox's modus operandi as a collection; videos are selected, removed from the context of their production and dissemination, then reframed in order to focus attention on their artistic features.

Within the art history world, opinion varies about the proper role of curators: deriving from the Latin *curare*, the curator is, on the one hand, a humble caretaker of objects, just as a religious curate helps the priest care for his congregation. But the curator also judges artworks, selecting some and rejecting others as the iron fist of institutional authority. In *Rethinking Curating*, Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook consider how the practice is changing with the advent of digital art and offer two alternative metaphors for curation in new media: curators may be filters rather than judges, or "context providers" rather than gatekeepers and guardians. These metaphors take us one-step closer toward understanding curation as a practice in digital sites for global Shakespeare. Filtering, at least in institutional art contexts, involves more or less a conscious choice on the part of curators, decisions about what to include and exclude, where and how to display artifacts, and so forth (Graham and Cook 2010, 45). Even in the most de-centered forms of new media art, the audience-as-curator is not a completely random collection of users. User-curators of avant-garde new media art tend to be friends and collaborators, or at the very least, like-minded patrons who have chosen to visit a certain exhibit or museum (Graham and Cook 2010, 268-75, *passim*). In our terms, the curator-as-filter gestures nicely toward the relationship between a database and

search engine-plus-the user, a human-machine cooperative. The curator-as-context provider, on the other hand, points to the paratext (essays, interviews, and so forth) that are important to the digital Shakespeare site as scholarly archive.

YouTube and the "Absence" of Curation

YouTube depends on individual contributions for its raw material, and on a combination of imitation, dialogue, and a complicated computer algorithm to establish relationships among the videos. YouTube uploaders are often sloppy about providing metadata, and the archive is unstable as users add and remove videos and the YouTube administration monitors copyright violations. From either a scholarly or civic perspective, this seeming lack of curation can be problematic. For instance, a basic search on the phrase "Romeo and Juliet" in Fall 2014 produced the following results. The same search on 21 October 2013 brought up a somewhat different mix of items. Heading the list was the trailer for the 2013 Carlo Carlei (Hailee Steinfeld) film version; fan uploads from trailers of the earlier versions by Baz Luhrmann (1996) and Franco Zeffirelli (1968); and two of the waning genre of youth-culture mashups. There were also clips from "The Animated Tales," a healthy dose of Dire Straits as a momentary distraction, some school productions — but surprisingly few examples of global Shakespeare. It took me until the third screen of uploads to find Gerard Presgourvic's French musical, *Romeo e Julietta: de la Haine a L'Amour*, which premiered in Paris in 2001 and was produced subsequently in multiple national locales. YouTube presents the musical in full through a fan upload. On screen 9, we find at last Oh Tae-Suk's 2010 Korean *Romeo and Juliet* in a short clip.

YouTube is much less stable than the scholarly online archives surveyed here. On YouTube, surfing is more natural than attending closely to the videos (see Huberman 2009), and the predominance of imitation and repetition mitigates against the economics of attention that Stewart sees at play in the collection; YouTube might be said to be governed instead by an economics of "inattention," and what teacher or scholar wants to cultivate that? (see Desmet 2016). YouTube's penchant for parody and hospitality to novel effects can also work against the historical and civic bent of the archive. While the machinations of repetition and recombination that, according to Michael North (2013), are foundational to novelty abound in YouTube and its remix culture, an appreciation of the exotic can turn easily into orientalism or outright racism, as Ayanna Thompson's (2010) analysis of commentary appended to YouTube Shakespeare from the youth sector has demonstrated. At the same time, paradoxically, YouTube can bring us closest among all these sites to a perfected collection — a hermetically sealed constellation of videos chosen specifically by creator-user as a personal playlist. Frustration with YouTube's tendency toward disorder has

produced a need for curators to work on behalf of other users. Gretchen Stiegchrist (2016), for instance, demonstrates how any YouTube user can become a YouTube curator, and various startups are offering themselves as the curatorial mediators between the sprawling YouTube database and viewers who want high-quality videos on any number of topics. (For discussion and examples, see Sormunen 2013; see also the earlier essay by Gehl 2009, which traces YouTube as collection back to the early modern *wunderkammer*.)

Conclusion: Reading (on) the Interface

At this point I might seem to be moving toward a recommendation that we should all avoid YouTube for our global Shakespeare and stick to the scholarly, strictly curated sites. But that is not exactly true. In the course of working through these issues, I have come to see heavily curated and wild archives like YouTube as complementary rather than antagonistic. I want to argue for the utility of YouTube as an "insane collection" based on its ability to make visible and available to intellectual scrutiny the rhetoric of the interface. In an essay on "Reading Interface," Johanna Drucker calls into question the tendency to regard digital interfaces as neutral, and preferably invisible, conduits between digital archives, databases, or collections and their users. Drucker sees digital interfaces instead as first, organizing rather than representing the user's reading experience and second, as forming a boundary space. The interface, by organizing objects (as Stewart says the collection does) and by defining boundaries (as Derrida says the archive does) functions, in effect, as a curator. Interface, as an agent of curation, also has significant ideological effects. As Drucker writes, "We have to understand interface as a constitutive boundary space, not just a place of mechanistic negotiation and exchange among elements" (2013, 216). Interface constitutes us as subjects, and "we are in constant formation in relation to interface" (216). If we live increasingly on and through the interface, and if curation constitutes the self as it constitutes the archive or collection, then the practice of curation is a foundational, rather than a specialized life skill.

This is where YouTube can prove useful. First, YouTube allegorizes the search process that scholarly sites seek to streamline and to contextualize with scholarly paratext. How did Dire Straits appear next to Franco Zeffirelli, you might ask? And so begins an excursion into the rhetoric of databases. Second, YouTube is all about curation; creating ad hoc playlists from one's inattentive searches is a major asset of the site, and the fun and frustration of marshalling those items into some semblance of order offers practice in the art of curating. Finally, precisely because it permits rapid, even sloppy, searching and disjunctive juxtapositions of videos, YouTube paradoxically can provide vigorous exercise, as Drucker points out, in "frame jumping," the rapid and disjunctive shifts among cognitive frames of reference that have characterized the Web since the days of

hypertext. This is the function that Richard A. Lanham (1993) has identified with electronic text as a species of postmodernism; frame jumping resembles the kind of shifts in focus and scale that we might find in Roy Lichtenstein's close-up comics or the parodic collage of disparate images in Richard Hamilton's *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing* (see Lanham 1993, 40). Frame-jumping and the rhetoric of electronic text support the experience of novel effects, which are typical of YouTube and its remix culture. The shock of novelty, according to Aristotle, also characterizes striking or powerful metaphors. "How true," a good metaphor makes us say, "but I never saw it before." Such metaphorical thinking is an important practice for us all in a digital world where every, man, woman, child, and machine is necessarily their own curator.

Notes

1. Alexa Alice Joubin rightly points out that there is no hard-and-fast line between curated and crowd-sourced archives. The MIT Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive, for instance, is a "collaborative" venture as well as scholarly, carefully curated site. (See the "About" message from Peter S. Donaldson, http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/about/.) Thus, there is such a thing as academic crowdsourcing, and the curated/crowd-sourced binary is a matter of degree.

2. Ramsay is writing specifically about relational databases, which work via charts of data, but argues that his analysis is pertinent as well to object oriented databases.

3. In part, McGann challenges the notion that a collection of texts marked up with markup languages (XML and SGML) technically may be considered as constituting a database. More broadly, he objects to the implication that the database's lack of hierarchy is "liberating" because it is not hierarchal. In McGann's view, neither assumption is true. McGann registers his objections when commenting on Ed Folsom's 2007 PMLA essay, which celebrates database as a new textual genre (see Folsom 2007, McGann 2007).

4. Two articles by Marlene Manoff (2004 and 2010) discuss the evolution of "archive" as a concept from the perspective of archivists and librarians as professionals. In the 2010 essay, Manoff offers a clear, succinct summary of Derrida's essay, "Archive Fever" (1995).

5. While this statement, which I first accessed in 2014, remains the same in 2017, my most recent search shows that the site contains 450 items.

6. On archival silence, see Joubin 2017, 436-39, *passim*.

7. For more on the complexities of the site of production vs site of performance, see Huang 2014. Her argument goes beyond conditions of individual performance to show how cultural politics

of the moment, as well as perceptions about the originating cultural tradition, complicate cross-cultural or "transcultural" productions of Shakespeare.

8. Looking at the interface of MIT Global Shakespeares, for instance, we notice the logic of the page layout (a series of separate boxes), complemented by the (largely invisible) machinations of the search engine, which threads to together videos according to the selected categories established by metadata.

References

BardBox: Shakespeare and Online Video. 2017. Available online at: http://bardbox.wordpress.com/ [accessed 17 July 2017].

Boon, Marcus. 2013. "Meditations in an Emergency: On the Apparent Destruction of My MP3 Collection." In *Contemporary Collecting: Objects, Practices, and the Fate of Things*. Edited by Kevin M. Moist and David Banash. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press. 3-12.

Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP). 2017. Available online at: http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/ [accessed 17 July 2017].

Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. 1995. "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression." *Diacritics* 25.2: 9-63.

Desmet, Christy. 2016. "The Economics of (In)Attention in YouTube Shakespeare." Special Issue on Shakespeare and Social Media. Edited by Maurizio Calbi and Stephen O'Neill. *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 10.1 (Spring/Summer).

Dorney, Kate. 2010. "The Ordering of Things: Allure, Access, and Archives." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28.1: 19-36.

Drucker, Johanna. 2013. "Reading Interface." *PMLA* 128.1: 213-20.

Fischlin, Daniel. 2010. "New interview with CASP Director, Daniel Fischlin: 'Parallel Streams': Sustaining the Digital Commons." Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project. 18 October. Available online at: http://news.canadianshakespeares.ca/2010/10/18/new-interview-with-casp-director-daniel-fisch/ [accessed 17 July 2017].

Fischlin, Daniel, and Mark Fortier, eds. 2000. *Adaptations of Shakespeare*. London: Routledge.

Folsom, Ed. 2007. "Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives." *PMLA* 122.5: 1571-79.

Gehl, Robert. 2009. "YouTube as Archive: Who will Curate this Digital *Wunderkammer*?" *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.1: 43-60.

Graham, Beryl, and Sarah Cook. 2010. *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Hodgdon, Barbara. 2016. *Shakespeare, Performance, and the Archive*. London: Routledge.

Holland, Peter. 2010. "The Lost Workers: Process, Performance, and the Archive." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28.1: 7-18.

Huang, Alexa. 2014. "Locating Asian Shakespeares: The Aesthetics of Transculturation." Special issue on Shakespeare in Asia, ed. Alexa Huang, *Shakespeare International Yearbook* 17: 181-98.

Huang, Alexa. 2011a. "Global Shakespeare 2.0 and the Task of the Performance Archive." *Shakespeare Survey* 64: 38-51.

Huang, Alexa. 2011b. "Global Shakespeares and Shakespeare Performance in Asia: Open-Access Digital Video Archives." *Asian Theatre Journal* 28.1: 244-50.

Huberman, Bernardo A. 2009. "Social Attention in the Age of the Web." In *Working Together or Apart: Promoting the Next Generation of Digital Scholarship*. Report of a Workshop Cosponsored by the Council on Library and Information Resources and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Council on Library and Information Resources, Washington, D.C. March 2009. Available online at: http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub145/pub145.pdf [accessed 21 April 2016].

Joubin, Alexa Alice. 2017. "Global Shakespeare Criticism Beyond the Nation State." In *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*. Edited by James C. Bulman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 423-40.

Joubin, Alexa Alice. 2017. Personal Communication, 19 September.

Lanham, Richard. 1993. *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Manoff, Marlene. 2010. "Archive and Database as Metaphor: Theorizing the Historical Record." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 10.4: 385-98.

Manoff, Marlene. 2004. "Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4.1: 9-25.

Manovich, Lev. 1999. "Database as Symbolic Form." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 5.2: 80-99. Reprinted in *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. 212-43.

Massai, Sonia. 2005. "Defining Local Shakespeares." In *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*. London: Routledge. 3-11.

McGann, Jerome. 2007. "Database, Interface, and Archival Fever." *PMLA* 122.5: 1588-92.

MIT Global Shakespeare Video and Performance Archive. 2017. Available online at: http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/ [accessed 15 July 2017].

Morris, Sylvia. 2012. "Bardbox: Shakespeare on YouTube." The Shakespeare Blog, 7 April. Available online at: http://theshakespeareblog.com/2012/04/bardbox-shakespeare-on-youtube/ [accessed 17 July 2017].

North, Michael. 2013. *Novelty: A History of the New*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ramsay, Stephen. 2004. "Databases." In *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. Edited by Susan Schreibman, Raya Siemens, and John Unsworth. Oxford: Blackwell. 177-97.

Siegchrist, Gretchen. 2017. "What is a Video Curator and what do they do?" *Lifewire*, 17 October. Available online at:https://www.lifewire.com/video-curation-channels-1081774 [accessed 16 July 2017].

Sormunen, Vilja. 2013. "How YouTube is Broken (And How Video Curation Will Fix It)." *AdAge*, 20 September. Available online at: http://adage.com/article/digitalnext/youtube-broken-video-curation-fix/244280/ [accessed 17 July 2017].

Stewart, Susan. 1984. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thompson, Ayanna. 2010. "Unmooring the Moor: Researching and Teaching on YouTube." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.33 (open peer review edition).

Trettien, Whitney Anne. 2010. "Disciplining Digital Humanities, 2010: Staging Shakespeare, XMAS, Shakespeare Performance in Asia, Shakespeare Quartos Archive, BardBox." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.33 (open peer review edition).