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**Call for papers**
**Digital Archives: Agency, Activism, and Contestation**
edited by Britt Baillie, Merit Maran, Mario Panico and Marjolein Uittenbogaard

Across memory and heritage studies, the archive has long been a central concern as an institution of recordkeeping, preservation and actualization of the past. In the digital age, producing and maintaining the archive takes place beyond traditional heritage institutions. **Today, the 'archive' has become a metaphor, used to denote a variety of websites, databases, social media outlets and personal cloud storage with archival functions.**

Yet these archival sites are far from neutral. Indeed, they have become contested spaces and at times even spaces of conflict, where emerging forms of digital activism challenge established hegemonic narratives and shape how heritage is represented and negotiated.

However, algorithmic interference, virtual echo chambers, and the governing power of platforms reveal a pressing question in our engagement with digital archives: **who has agency in the digital archive, and how may the archive itself act as an agent**?

This special issue, developed as part of the Horizon Europe Twinning project DIGHT-Net, critically examines how digital technologies transform the semiotic capacities of the archive and decentralize the human as sole arbiter of preservation. Contributors explore the interplay between archives, agents and activists, for instance, through theoretical reflections on human and non-human agencies and emotional affordances in the archive, including those of the archivist, the heritage community and the user, as well as the role of the (virtual) museum as an archival agent.

**The issue also welcomes practical perspectives on agency in the digital archive that consider the 'politics of digitization' influencing what cultural heritage is made available in the digital space; the (absence) of ecological agency in enabling the digital data repositories; and the pitfalls and potential that digital heritage poses in rectifying or reinforcing global power and information asymmetries.**

Moreover, it invites case-study approaches on the agencies of non-human actors in the digital archive, including those of generative AI and commercial platforms, and how these dynamics mediate, amplify or distort online and offline processes of conflict, security, democracy, and peace.

Possible areas of interest may include – but are not limited to – the following question, which can be approached with various theoretical and methodological perspectives:

- How do media-archaeological approaches reshape the analysis of digital archival practices, especially in relation to their temporal/spatial configurations?
- How can curatorial practices, co-creation processes, and meta-data capture affect and influence the creation and curation of digital archives?
- In what ways do artistic or creative reuses of archival material act as forms of digital activism and open spaces of contestation within digital archives?
- What roles do digital archives play in collective healing, trauma work, or activist memory-making?
- How can the changing ontology of the digital archive address archival silences and marginalized voices?
- How can the digital archives be mobilised within counter-colonial narratives?
- How are hybrid warfare and securitization concerns impacting archival infrastructures and user agency?
- How do post-humanist concerns impact digital archival processes?
- In what ways do generative AI systems reconfigure authorship, memory, and archival authenticity?

Authors are invited to submit abstracts of **no more than 500 words**, together with a **150-word biography**, by the **2nd of February 2026.**

**Please send your proposals via email to**
Britt Baillie - brittbaillie@cas.au.dk
Merit Maran - merit.maran@tlu.ee
Mario Panico - mario.panico@unibo.it
Marjolein Uittenbogaard - m.i.uittenbogaard@gmail.com

After selection, the full articles (**6000-7000 words max, including bibliography**) are to be submitted by the **1st September 2026**. Images are permitted (a maximum of five, in high resolution and copyright-free, authors are responsible for securing this authorisation before publication).

If you have any questions about the issue, do not hesitate to write to the editors

**Calendar and deadlines**
**2nd February 2026**: deadline for abstract submission
**10th March 2026**: response from the editors
**1st September 2026**: deadline for article submission
**15th October 2026**: peer-review responses
**30th April 2027**: publication of the special issue

## About the DIGHT-Net project



**DIGHT-Net** is a Twinning project that will enhance research capacity, broaden the research partnership and increase the visibility and attractiveness of Tallinn University (TLU) in digital cultural heritage studies. Our partners are the University of Bologna (UNIBO), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), and the University of Turku (UTU).

To mobilise and amplify digital cultural heritage research locally, nationally and internationally, ensure sustainability and maximise the impact, the joint research hub of Digital Cultural Heritage studies (DIGHT-Hub) will be co-established at the TLU's School of Humanities.

The project shall prototype a Twinned Digital Archive of Juri Lotman and Umberto Eco, digitize the archive materials of Lotman, and build a semiotic theory of digital cultural heritage, based on the work of Lotman, Eco and other scholars.

The objectives will be achieved through networking and collaboration activities with internationally-leading research institutions.

For more information see: https://dight-net.tlu.ee/

## About the Journal

**Heritage, Memory and Conflict Journal (HMC)** is an international, peer-reviewed, diamond open access Journal published by **Amsterdam University Press**. Its main scope is to critically analyse the tangible and intangible remnants, traces and spaces of the past in the present and the remaking of pasts into heritage and memory, including processes of appropriations, restitutions and mediatisation. This interdisciplinary journal addresses the dynamics of memory and forgetting, as well as the politics of trauma, mourning and reconciliation, identity, nationalism and ethnicity, heritage preservation and restoration, material culture, conservation and management, conflict archaeology, dark tourism, diaspora and postcolonial memory, terrorscapes, migration, borders, and the mediated re-enactments of conflicted pasts. HMC covers the fields of memory studies, cultural studies, museum studies, arts and media andperformative studies, postcolonial studies, ethnology, Holocaust and genocide studies, conflict and identity studies, archaeology, material culture and landscapes, conservation and restoration, cultural, public and oral history, critical and digital heritage studies. By crossing academic, artistic and professional boundaries, the journal aims to offer an interdisciplinary space for the rich scholarship in these fields and to contribute to a better understanding of the extent to which memory sites and discourses operate as vehicles at local, national and transnational levels. For more information about the journal, see: https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/26665050.