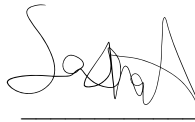


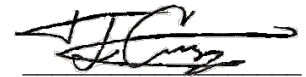
REIMAGINING COLLECTIVE MEMORY THROUGH DIGITAL RESOURCES: CURATAR

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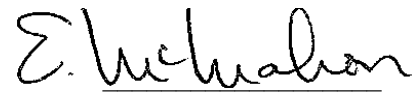
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Sasha Aronson Reimagining Collective Memory Through Digital Resources: CuratAR

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This thesis posits the question; How can digital resources enhance the public's ability to both access and contribute historical information and artifacts to collective and cultural memory? It seeks to understand how collective memory can be accessed and harnessed through digital resources. It does this first through a discussion of the theoretical development of collective memory and then applying the term as a framework for understanding contemporary digital resources that focus on accessing memory in a public history context. The thesis concludes with a presentation of the methodology of CuratAR, a joint project between Tulane University Professor Felipe Cruz and me. CuratAR seeks to be an urban computing software that can blend personal and collective memories into an urban landscape. We explore how other resources prove the value of transposing audio-visual cultural objects onto a digital geographic space and use this justification to embark on our own project. CuratAR has the potential to merge elements of public history and preservationism to give the New Orleans public agency in defining their own past.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: THE CURATAR PROJECT	1
THE “WHY” OF CURATAR	4
SECTION II: COLLECTIVE MEMORY THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	5
INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE.....	5
PRE-HALBWACHS.....	6
THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALBWACHS’ COLLECTIVE MEMORY	9
POST-HALBWACHS CONCEPTIONS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY: MEMORY STUDIES	12
SECTION III: THE APPLICATION OF POST-HALBWACHSIAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY ...	19
COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK (CMW)	19
WHY PUBLIC HISTORY RESOURCES?	20
AUDIO-VISUAL PUBLIC HISTORY RESOURCES	23
<i>Centre National de L’audiovisuel (CNA)</i>	25
<i>Post-Apartheid Archival Projects</i>	27
<i>Digitization of Indigenous Collective Memories</i>	28
DIGITAL MAPPING AND THE POWER OF GEOGRAPHY IN ACCESSING COLLECTIVE MEMORY	30
<i>Urban Tapestries and City of Memory Projects</i>	33
<i>Roteiro de Consciência do Brazil (Brazilian Road Map)</i>	35
SECTION IV: APPLICATIONS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY FOR THE FUTURE: CURATAR	
.....	37

Section I: The CuratAR Project

The CuratAR project will function as an application that allows individuals or communities to upload “memory objects” in audio and visual capacities. These objects can take on varied forms (oral interviews, pictures etc.) that evoke a contributor’s specific memory or conception of the relevant moment in the past. We then will tie these memory objects to their relevant historical locations by physically placing them on the digital maps that CuratAR will use. Our data model will also allow contributors to identify people and objects that already exist on the digital map that they deem historically relevant to their submission. The model will be designed to be malleable, allowing for contributors to connect their submissions to previous and existing data. As a result, the backbone of CuratAR is utilizing two different but connected conceptions of open-source archiving.

In its most basic formation, our open-source database will be accessible to the submissions of the citizens of New Orleans, small local collections, and archives. This will allow the data model to be continuously updated as different submissions alter how historical events are tagged in their relationship to historically relevant people, objects, and eventually places. However, we will also use the term open-source to describe how we conceptualize the usage of our software itself. We recognize that contributors may not always want their memory objects to exist publicly in conjugation with other submissions so we will publish the data model behind our software on an open-source platform. Furthermore, we will create a “private” mode on the application in which the only contributor is the user themselves. Our hope is to provide a resource that can be adapted

to the specific ways that people and communities perceive the past and the memories associated with them. The possibilities of our software does not necessarily have to be unified into a single application but rather can be used by people and communities in their own projects that work with memory and history. We are also looking to work with many of the smaller local collections and archives within New Orleans to give their memory objects more visibility in the public eye. By filtering their objects through our adaptable matrix, we can thus show the significance their collections have to conceptions of New Orleans' past. In doing so, we are present as both useful for the prominence of the collection itself but also for directly connecting the collections to relevant historical events, people, and most importantly, location.

We will begin forming the data model around certain baseline historical events that can then be adapted and added to as more contributors add submissions. Every time a contributor adds a memory object, they will have to input its connection through the charting of relevant people, events, and location. As more contributors add their submissions, the data model will continue to grow to include new people, events, and locations that further add context to each memory object. We are relying on the contributors to input their memory through this matrix, and we anticipate that a team headed by Professor Cruz and myself will need to be on-call to approve of the context surrounding each submission. Our idea is that the data model will never stop growing and evolving, adapting to new ways that historical events are categorized and identified through memory objects by our contributors.

We also anticipate that in later versions of the application, older maps of New Orleans can be transposed onto the digital map we are using to show the connection

between memory objects and geography. Users can physically see how a memory object was connected to location within its actual historic context. For example, memory objects of people that emigrated to New Orleans after Katrina can be coupled with historic maps that show the changes in post-Katrina demographics in the city. Our goal is to give the user a sense of moving back in time with the maps themselves as they explore different memory objects.

We believe the inherent potential of this resource is that it allows the public to look at the past from varied perspectives that are not necessarily in agreement with one another about their conception of the past. We wish to push back against unified historical conceptions of the past and allow users the freedom to make up their own mind about how they perceive New Orleans' past. In doing so, we are hoping to promote a dynamic understanding of the past that is always adapting based on new and diverse submissions. We perceive history as a cacophony and we want to give contributors' agency in adding to the multiplicity of conceptions of New Orleans' past. The private mode of the application will also allow people to trace their communities' memories in an insulated fashion if they have little interest in contributing to this broader project. Communities can form threads that are based on how they conceive the past and have no connection to parallel submissions from other contributors.

Finally, we also contend that this resource can be beneficial for historians and archivists as a method for visualizing different perspectives from the past. When they are putting together an exhibit or shaping a historical narrative, they can use CuratAR to help them understand the local context of the historical moment they are working on. It may

cause them to reconceptualize their work and allow for more complete historical narratives that may not be so unified.

The “Why” of CuratAR

We believe CuratAR can become a useful resource that can bring much needed context to historical narratives. History is often regarded as existing in a time and place that is distinctly apart from the present. Our project seeks to bring a tangibility to history, grounded in its connection to geography that users experience anyway on a daily basis. We believe that tying memory to location allows the public to conceptualize the past as something affecting them in the present rather than existing by itself apart from any current relevance.

We assert that historians themselves are not only scholars of the past per se, but rather are memory agents that parcel through varied understandings of the past from different personal and collective memories. We want CuratAR to enable historians to draw from sources they may not know to look for, featuring experiences of the past from contributors that essentially function as local archivists themselves. This application also gives people within New Orleans agency to push back against dominant historical conceptions of the past and craft their version of the past as it relates to the memory objects that were submitted. Because people have the power to submit objects themselves, they can craft the context of historical narratives. We allow these narratives to come in conflict with one another to further emphasize the dynamic nature of the past and memory's connection to it. By allowing the public to submit memory objects digitally, we believe we ease the need for physical collection in the curation of historic narratives. Our goal is to make history and the past feel more concrete in its presentation by involving the public directly in the construction of the past itself.

In order for CuratAR to be effective in its goal of using memory to bring tangibility to the public's conception of the past, it is first important to understand how memory relates to history.

The stark connections and distinctions between memory and history have been a focus of the interdisciplinary field of Memory Studies. Collective memory, a term devised in the 20th century, has been used to show how dominant conceptions of the past are potentially restrictive to individual memory. In giving the public agency in New Orleans' past, we hope to break down the limiting nature of collective memory and begin a new process of collective remembrance.

Section II: Collective Memory Theoretical Foundations

Introduction to Collective Memory and Historical Importance

Originally coined by French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is a term that in the last century has acquired significance across a multitude of academic disciplines. It is a framework used to analyze both contemporary and historical communities and societies because of the explosion in scholarship on the subject. Collective memory is distinguished from personal memory because any scholar using it implicitly acknowledges that memory itself is a social phenomenon, indelibly tied to community belief systems and past events. The term is both conceived to be a matrix by which individual memory is filtered through and as a larger abstraction that exists within and apart from members of the community, transcending the deaths of any individual (Niethammer 1995; Russell 2006)¹. Both scholars of the past and the present use Halbwachs' term to better understand how communities are formed and why they operate as they do. Across all disciplines is the understanding that collective memory is eternal and therefore essential to any comprehensive social analysis. This thesis sets out to show that collective memory is not only supremely applicable to academic analyses, but also to modern digital public history resources because of its eternal and transcendent nature. It will establish the origins of Halbwachs' term, showing that conceptions of interpersonal memory were evolving from as early

¹ Niethammer, "Diesseits des »Floating Gap«. Das kollektive Gedächtnis und die Konstruktion von Identität im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs."; Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs."

as Ancient Greek literature and has continued to evolve past Halbwachs' death. An analysis of the development of collective memory is necessary because our project, CuratAR, seeks to break down dominant collective memories by giving personal memories that have not been given the proper light in traditional public history and archival resources a space to be heard. We assert that this space has tremendous applications to facilitating informed societies and to preserving the past. We hope to enable users in preserving their memories as a part of our larger project of collective remembrance.

Pre-Halbwachs

The conception of memory as an eternal phenomenon first appears in Western scholarship in Ancient Greek literature. Pre-Platonic early Greeks were obsessive about memory as it formed the foundations by which each succeeding generation formed traditions and established precedent². Bards tasked with reciting epic poems such as the *Iliad* were human mediums of memory, maintaining the present Greek culture to the past, to the conception of their *history*. The epics functioned as far more than simply stories, as Eric Havelock has argued, their existence functioned as a pseudo-encyclopedia of ethics, politics, and history.³ It is no surprise then that Simondon (1982) and Vernant (1996) show that the Archaic Greek worldview tied memory directly to immortality as prominent figures lived on through the legends and epics matriculated throughout Greek culture, giving them a space independent of the natural plane of existence.⁴ For individuals, reputation and interpersonal social memory were inseparable, the knowledge of one's accomplishments and failures *were* social memory, existing well beyond the scope of personal memory. Russell (2006) argues that the Greeks conceptualized social memory as beyond humanity, an abstraction that lived around and beyond the individuals that tapped into

² Casey, Remembering.

³ Havelock, Preface to Plato.

⁴ Simondon, *La Mémoire et l'oubli.*; Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece.*

it. He goes on to show that Archaic Greek conceptions of memory existed primarily for functional practical reasons.⁵ Inherited traditions, passed down through the oral medium was the closest form that can be related to modern collective memory. It was in the fifth century BCE that conceptions of memory began to dramatically shift, as the production of an epic written down, Plato's *Illiad*, set Western literature on the path to discussions of memory that have continued to exist today.

The impact of the written word on Greek conceptions of memory cannot be understated, and Plato's conversion of "oral poetry" into prose initiated the shift in how Greek culture conceived of and utilized memory. Plato's ultimate concern with memory is a spiritual one, his prose ponders the nature of memory, or Mnemosyne as it was often referred to, and its divine powers over humanity. Plato's writing on memory is rooted in oral tradition, which maintains a divine element of memory that continues to conceive of memory as existing beyond the individual⁶. Platonic recall is not restricted by any historical or temporal boundaries, it exists in a plane all to itself with individuals tapping into it whenever society deemed it necessary. However, this divine conception of memory was still inherently practical, Greeks utilized and spoke of memory in the recollection of specific events and people. Aristotle would later further de-emphasize the divine nature of memory, bringing the concept "fully down to earth"⁷ and directly tying memory to empirical facts and events in turn attributing more power to the individual's mind. However, neither Plato nor Aristotle tied their conceptions of memory to time. Time was, as Aristotle deemed it, merely "the measure of motion," and the idea of memory was meant to transcend earthly time to exist independently.

Anne Whitehead provides the most in depth analysis of the development of the scholarship on memory in her 2009 book, *Memory* and in it she shows a direct link from Plato to

⁵ Rusell 2006

⁶ Whitehead, *Memory*.

⁷ Casey, *Remembering*.

Halbwachs in its development. Her book, along with Amos Funkenstein's overview of memory studies provides the foundation for this thesis' discussion of Augustinian thought on memory to the advent of the 19th century field of memory studies. It was not until Augustine, that the Archaic, practical view of memory was challenged in Western Literature and time was unequivocally linked to conceptions of memory. Augustine's *Confessions* is the first Western recorded analysis of the concept of memory, and in it he also becomes the first major Western scholar to depart from Platonic recall. To Augustine, memory could not be separated from the individual or the individual's experiences because this brought them closer to God. Memory was a function of the mind, a measure of the conditions of one's spirit and the events that they experienced. Therefore, "the experience of memory is also a measure of time," with the past and future being derivatives of the present itself.⁸

Scholarship on memory through the Enlightenment and Romantic periods directly built upon Augustine's work as memory was further perceived to be connected to the self. Locke defined the active process of reviving the past as a form of human reason, a power that humans possessed to distinguish their superiority. Romantic writers such as Rousseau argued against their Enlightenment predecessors, asserting that memory was an unconscious occurrence, happening *upon* individuals rather than individuals tapping into certain memories.⁹ The rapid societal and technological changes that occurred in the 19th century vastly changed how memory was perceived by scholars. For the first time, history and memory were conceived to be diametrically opposed to one another, one seen as empirical and the other as inherently subjective.¹⁰

The 19th century's "memory crisis," as Whitehead describes it, was an inevitable result of larger changes to societal structure. It was in this period of great societal and academic change that harbored the thinking and works of Émile Durkheim, the spiritual grandfather of collective

⁸ Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness."

⁹ Whitehead, *Memory*.

¹⁰ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*.

memory. Durkheim was a part of a much larger French scholarly movement in the study of memory in which thinking on memory was radically shifting. The terms *mémoire* and *mémoire éternelle* were cited often by 19th century French scholars to discuss memory as a social concept that is passed down from generation to generation.¹¹ In what seems like a bit of a return to Platonic conceptions of memory, France became the center of the study of memory in the 19th century, helping to birth Durkheim's *conscience collective* and *représentations collectives*, the concepts that individuals think and take action because of and based on the interactions of the group.¹² Durkheim rejected the enlightenment focus on the individual, refocusing the concept of memory back onto the collective. To Durkheim, there was no pure individual thought so there could not be a pure form of individual memory as Augustine and Locke had developed. Halbwachs was a student of Durkheim's and his work *On Collective Memory* was directly built from the assumption that Durkheim's discovery of collective consciousness was reflective of how society functioned. The early 20th century saw historians reimagining society as purely social, rather than the collection of individual identities and beliefs. Halbwachs' collective memory was clearly born out of its time as scholars grappled with the rapid changes around them, they understood society as surviving primarily because of the strength of the group. The group's power to present a limited view of the past was a focus of this era's scholarship on memory and our project's goals are rooted in this understanding of memory and the past.

The Development of Halbwachs' Collective Memory

There can be no understatement on the impact of Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory*. He directly built upon Durkheim's collective consciousness concept but expanded it into newfound territory. However, his work was not always seen that way. In his lifetime Halbwachs attempted to gain recognition in the scholarly world; In 1925 publishing *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*

¹¹Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs."

¹² Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*.

(The Social Frameworks of Memory) in Durkheim's journal *Les Travaux de L'Année Sociologique*¹³ but failed to gain traction in the sociological or historical communities. It would not be until after Halbwachs' death in a concentration camp in 1945 that his conceptions of memory would become, as historian Erik Apfelbaum describes, "a true paradigm shift in the dominant conception of the [memory] discipline."¹⁴ His life's work *On Collective Memory* was never finished, and in a morbidly ironic way, it was only the memory of Halbwachs that allowed his concepts to persist rather than the man himself. The incomplete *On Collective Memory* was meant to be Halbwachs' response to criticisms of *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, but it took until 1950 for his work to be heard. Presses Universitaires de France published *On Collective Memory*, and it quickly became one of the most referenced and translated works in scholarship on memory or collective consciousness.¹⁵

While Halbwachs' work shows great reverence and respect for his mentor's concepts, he attempts to expand on Durkheim's theses, even further emphasizing the importance of the group on individual thought. Halbwachs' collective memory "resulted in the complete obliteration of the individual consciousness as real and determinant" whereas his teacher was more focused on simply "establishing the autonomy of sociology."¹⁶ The transition away from viewing consciousness and memory as an individual concept was initiated by Halbwachs' mentor, but it was Halbwachs and other 20th century scholars that fully established the concept that thought was always filtered through a social matrix. Halbwachs argues that the power of society is not simply a physical one over the individual. Rather, he asserts that society has direct control over the individual's memories, and therefore, the individual's mind.¹⁷ Halbwachs is often read as a warning to future generations to be actively wary of any memory built on a group identity.

¹³ Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.

¹⁴ Apfelbaum, "Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory."

¹⁵ Palazzolo, "The Roman Cultural Memory of the Conquest of Latium."

¹⁶ Gedi and Elam, "Collective Memory — What Is It?"

¹⁷ Gedi and Elam, "Collective Memory — What Is It?"

However, it is important to note that Halbwachs does not present a solution to escaping collective and tribalist thought, asserting that the individual cannot exist without the reinforcement of the group. He contends that no individual could ever truly isolate themselves from the broader sociohistorical factors that define their community, that memory is the active reconstruction of the past by every member of the group and every subsequent generation.¹⁸ To Halbwachs, memory did not belong to the individual, it was the community that utilized memory to move the group forward through history. He had witnessed major sociopolitical uprisings in the 19th and early 20th century caused by, in his determination, collective understandings of the past that were destructive to the present. Halbwachs feared the collective's ability to manipulate the individual's conceptions of events in the past. He purely conceived memory as episodic, rather than semantic, focusing on the events that a community considered central to group identity as the primary way that history was told through society.¹⁹ *On Collective Memory* relegated the individual to a bystander role in the larger development of collective consciousnesses and, to the construction of his conception of history itself.

Halbwachs' collective memory not only sought to expand upon Durkheim's original thesis but also to challenge the dominant conception of history itself as an empirical unfiltered medium. In *On Collective Memory*, history is a tool to be utilized by society for their specific and present needs, a function of collective consciousness constructing a collective memory of the past. Halbwachs was wary of historians, arguing that the recording of historical events is an inherently destructive force, promoting certain memories of the past and relegating others to non-existence.²⁰ Gedi and Elam (1996) show that Halbwachs conceived an entirely new version of historical writing.²¹ He did not believe history had an obligation to some conception of "historical

¹⁸ Apfelbaum, "Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory."

¹⁹ Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs."

²⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

²¹ Gedi and Elam, "Collective Memory — What Is It?"

truth," dramatically shifting his definition of history to be a tool produced by society. To Halbwachs, society "pronounced judgement" on the past, giving certain events meaning and societal value based on the fluctuating ideological and moralistic needs of the community.²² Collective memory supplemented history, giving credence to the historical moments that shaped communities into their contemporary forms. He argues that history is only unitary and unbiased in its collective conception by the group. History imposes artificial and, importantly, retrospective boundaries on time that are then either challenged or reinforced by the dominant collective memory.²³ Halbwachs' conception of history dramatically shifted scholarship on historical writing, and while many subsequent historians fervently challenged Halbwachs' anti-empirical version of history, his work served as a warning to future historians to be aware of their own place in society as the constructors of the *present* through their understandings of the past. In some ways, Halbwachs represents a scholarly return to Aristotelian understandings of memory and history as functions of the present rather than the remnants of the past. His collected works, culminating in *On Collective Memory*, gives any historian a reason to pause and consider the impact of their work in the present and to recognize that history both directly influences and is influenced by dominant collective memories. We focus on Halbwachs' collective memory as the intellectual foundation for the CuratAR project because we assert that digital resources provide historians with the opportunity to work against the dominant narratives they help create. CuratAR seeks to give the historian more context in their construction of the past, and in doing so allowing for history to be conceived from many different angles.

Post-Halbwachs Conceptions of Collective Memory: Memory Studies

Although *On Collective Memory* and *The Social Frameworks of Memory* were not pervasive across scholarship during his lifetime, there was some engagement from Halbwachs'

²² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

²³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

contemporaries with his work before and after his internment in concentration camps. Marc Bloch is the first known scholar other than Halbwachs to use the term collective memory in his review of *The Social Frameworks of Memory*. In it, he challenges the sociological perspective of Halbwachs to include a more personal and psychological approach. A historian at heart, Bloch was unnerved by Halbwachs' insistence to separate the operation of collective memory from understandings of historical fact. To prove this, he shows that individuals are members of multiple groups, and therefore are subject to multiple collective memories that have the power to illuminate the pure truth in historical fact.²⁴ The engagement between Halbwachs and Bloch would help shape Halbwachs' subsequent publications and his conceptions of memory. Bloch challenged his colleague to engage in his collective memory hypothesis with historical analysis to understand the applications of Halbwachs' concept. This eventually led to Halbwachs adding *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land* to *On Collective Memory*.²⁵ Halbwachs' other major colleague, the psychiatrist Charles Blondel also engaged with Halbwachs in his own review of Halbwachs' 1925 publication, arguing that his friend actively ignored basic semantic principles of memory. Blondel resisted Halbwachs' assertion that memory was only built from episodes in the past experienced collectively. He believed the field of sociology set out to dominate all other disciplines, and he actively worked against that assumption.²⁶ Blondel was the contemporary most actively engaged with Halbwachs at the time, his staunch defense of psychology and the individualism of memory forced Halbwachs to continue to expand his thesis to include understandings of memory as a multidimensional framework for understanding why *individuals* act as they do within the group.²⁷

²⁴ Bloch, "Le Compte Rendu Critique de Marc Bloch Dans La Revue de Synthèse Historique."

²⁵ Halbwachs, "THE LEGENDARY TOPOGRAPHY OF THE GOSPELS IN THE HOLY LAND."

²⁶ Blondel, "Revue Critique: M. Halbwachs Les Cadres Sociaux de La Memoire."

²⁷ Tota and Hagen, *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*.

Anthropologist E. Evans-Pritchard was one of the first to actively use Halbwachs' conception of collective memory in a non-theoretical study. In his 1962 study of pre-modern societies, Evans-Pritchard used collective memory as the backbone of his analysis, concluding that the past was always littered in material, ritual, and narrative practices that "are part of the social life which the anthropologist can directly observe" and "encapsulated [memory] in a context of present thought."²⁸ Pritchard confirmed and expanded upon Halbwachs' thesis, showing that collective memory could, and does exist through non-written, often oral means of preservation that maintained specific genealogical memories for generations---- turning memory into mythology. However, it would not be until the 1980's that collective memory became a lynchpin term in memory scholarship as a new field within academia began to develop: Memory Studies.

The late 1980's and early 1990's saw an explosion in scholarship on memory, with Halbwachs' collective memory often serving as the starting point for analysis. Egyptologist Jan Assman and his wife Aleida Assman developed the theory of cultural memory as a more formalized understanding of how memory pervades through society. Their assertion was that collective memory was a form of "communicative memory," operating purely at the social level and dealing primarily with things experienced and heard, giving it a short lifespan as a form of social memory (3-4 generations).²⁹ By contrast, their cultural memory operated on a far broader cultural level, engaging with mythical-*proto* history and events, *utilizing* collective memory as one contributing factor in the development of larger cultural phenomena.³⁰ The Assmans were attempting to create a synthesized definition of social memory that did not actively attack the field of history and its historiography, instead dealing with memory as it related to forms of heritage.

²⁸ Pritchard, *Social Anthropology and Other Essays, Combining Social Anthropology and Essays in Social Anthropology*.

²⁹ Assmann, J. 1988a. "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität." In *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, edited by J. Assmann and T.Hölscher, 9-19. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

³⁰ 1992 Assman (*Found in Roman Conquest*)

Jan Assman's initial essay on the subject, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität* was then later expanded upon in his 1992 book *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in Frühen Hochkulturen*.³¹ These publications were a part of the larger redefinition and refocusing of collective memory as the fundamental basis of the emerging field of memory studies. The Assmans remain some of the leading scholars on the connection between the individual, society, culture, and memory. At the same time from 1984 to 1992, another scholar, Pierre Nora, was developing an analysis of French society utilizing collective memory in the most in-depth application of Halbwachs' conception to date.

Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire* analyzed several prominent French historical sites, determining that Halbwachs' collective memory was, in fact, an applicable term to understanding how the past is conceived and, how history is constructed. Nora's work is the most active engagement any scholar has had with Halbwachs' conception of the separation of history and collective memory. He showed that while collective memory is source material for historical construction, history can and does manipulate collective memory in its own construction. History is meant to be universal, and therefore, its conflict with memory is inevitable and necessary in modern societies,

“Memory is life.... It remains in permanent evolution.... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer... History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority.... Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.”³²

Nora resists the scholarly debate that the Assmans engaged in, arguing that the distinction between collective memory and other types of memory was unimportant compared the relationship between memory and history. Nora's work looked to the future of modern societies

³¹ Assman, “Kollektives Gedächtnis Und Kulturelle Identität.”; Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*.

³² Nora, “Les Lieux de Mémoire.”

as he feared that the dominant values of change and progress in modern society threatened the persistence of accurate reconstructions of the past. Nora's work indicated a shift in scholarship on collective memory that looked to its importance to the future rather than simply the past. This would be a defining feature of Memory Studies in the modern age.

Nora's highly consequential work saw much engagement from scholars around the world. Cultural historians such as Michael Kammen and sociologist Jeffrey Olick engaged with Nora's work from the new "dynamics of memory" perspective that treated collective memory as a never-ending, active process of negotiation with the past and the present.³³ Israeli historian, Anita Shapira, was another major contributor to this modern perspective on collective memory, arguing that historians, just as with politicians and social elites are "memory elites" that "shape the picture of the past according to the needs and agonies of the present," utilizing academic writing facetiously to "shape a certain historical memory."³⁴ This perspective takes on a highly negative view of society, arguing that the past has never been faithfully reconstructed by the societies of the present. However, this perspective did do much to refine the powerful approach that Halbwachs and then Nora took on. Other scholars such as Amos Funkenstein and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi attempted to develop a conception of historical consciousness that synthesizes and mediates the conflict between memory and history. Yerushalmi showed that the Jewish people of Israel actively relinquished empirical history for the sake of collective and cultural memories in the form of scripture that maintained the strength of the Israeli nation.³⁵ Funkenstein attempts to build on this idea by further emphasizing individuality, arguing that Halbwachs and Nora ignore "that every change in language or in the symbolic system and functions that comprise the cognitive organization of the world (whether in high or local folk culture) begins with the

³³ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*.; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*.

³⁴ Shapira, "Historiography and Memory."

³⁵ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*.

speaking, acting, recognizing individual.”³⁶ The engagement with Nora’s scholarship helped to create a rich debate on collective and cultural memory that continued into the 21st century. This scholarship is essential to the construction of CuratAR because it shows how traditional forms of historical construction are potentially restricting because of their inherently social nature. We believe that a digital resource that allows for diverse perspectives on history will, in fact, provide historians and the public alike with a more complete picture of the past itself.

By the early 21st century, Memory Studies were a major part of scholarship in sociology, history, and psychology that was developing the “core concepts and definitions of collective memory, new methods for analyzing the dynamics of memory formation and transmission, and models for comparative work across culture, place, and time”³⁷ As more scholars engaged with the subject, collective memory became the most hotly debated subject in Memory Studies. Gedi and Elam (1996) argue that collective memory is simply a stand-in term for myth as they attempted to show that collective and personal memory are one in the same.³⁸ While Schwartz (2000) and Gubrium (1993) do believe in the utility of collective memory, they could not even agree on what made a memory worthy of the collective memory denotation. However, it was studies such as Helena Pohlandt McCormick’s work on the Soweto Protests in South Africa that showed the immense power that memory agents in the form of governmental powers have in perpetuating oppression in individuals in society. Through interviews with South Africans, McCormick concluded that collective memory, when harnessed by the powerful can cause individuals to “internalize oppression through ideology.”³⁹ Collective memory was the framework for studies like McCormick’s in the 21st century that looked at how the past was constructed to serve only certain people and groups. Changes in technology in this century have, and will,

³⁶ Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness.”

³⁷ Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*.

³⁸ Gedi and Elam, “Collective Memory — What Is It?”

³⁹ Pohlandt-McCormick, “‘I Saw a Nightmare . . .’”

immense applications in public history, allowing for memories (such as the South Africans in McCormick's study) that have been minimized by those in power and historians alike to be given new light in the modern age.

The next section will consider the post-Halbwachsian scholarship in its analysis of public history resources that have attempted to illuminate certain memories that come into conflict with collective memory. We assert that digital public history resources are powerful enough to provide a sense of tangibility when it comes to the past while also allowing for local outlooks on that past to emerge as significant even if they are in opposition to the dominant historical narrative. The scholars of memory discussed above show that historical narratives are based in the collective memories that are shaped by the present societal structures. We want to give the public and historians the chance to take control of the collective memory in order to change the conception of what a historical narrative has to be. We assert that conflicts between different historical narratives actually provide us with a great opportunity to continuously re-form how we look at the past. The resources discussed in the following section are meant to illustrate how collective memory can be broken down by both historians and the public with the right tools.

Section III: The Application of Post-Halbwachsian Collective Memory

Collective Memory Work (CMW)

Conceived of by sociologist Frigga Haug in the 1980's as a feminist and Marxist method of research, Collective Memory Work (CMW) has proven to be an effective methodology for establishing agency in individuals whose personal memories are marginalized by larger collective memories. Haug's central assumption is that the past is a subjective phenomenon filtered through the matrix of memory, placing it at the heart of the emerging Memory Studies discipline. She warns that individuals naturally tend to "disregard anything that does not fit in with the unified image that we present to ourselves and others."⁴⁰ Her methodology further assumes that societal power structures are fundamentally embedded into the narratives individuals tell themselves and seeks to solve some of the inherent problems for individuals in collective settings that Halbwachs denoted. In its most basic form, CMW takes groups of no more than 12 people and tasks them with exploring a topic that invokes fear in many of the participants through the process of memory-writing. Haug's central innovation was that her space allowed individuals to have the freedom to express their memories in a way that broke from the dominant collective memory. Her goal, achieving "a sense of mental unrest," was meant to safely give the participants a sense of agency in their own past. Since its conception, the methodology has been utilized in a variety of educational contexts to stimulate creativity and provide students with an effective technique to work through dilemmas.⁴¹

This thesis asserts that CuratAR and other similar digital public history resources can be a useful tool in the educational applications of CMW. Furthermore, we believe that CMW can be used as a basis for library and archival science educational programs. Projects such as the

⁴⁰ Haug, "Memory-Work as a Method of Social Science Research: A Detailed Rendering of Memory-Work Method."

⁴¹ Widerberg, "Explorative Teaching and Research—From Memory Work to Experience Stories."

Knowledge River Project at the School of Information Resources and Library Science in the University of Arizona already seek to utilize their digital resources to provide new forms of archival education that is inclusive to marginalized groups.⁴² We assert that CMW, coupled with digital resources like CuratAR, can serve as an example to future public historians in how to properly work with memory. CuratAR can be used to chart the memories that are emerged in the CMW sessions. By tying what was discussed in the sessions to geography itself, the marginalized memories are given even greater tangibility.

Why Public History Resources?

“It is the present system which makes all researchers conform to the same pattern of documentation; it will be the computer that will liberate researchers and enhance the role of the individual in his attempt to reconstruct the past by giving each researcher the That is freedom.”⁴³

Taken from a presentation given by the United States' fifth ever official archivist, James B. Rhoads in 1969, scholars of public history were looking to technology as the solution to the marginalization of certain memories by the second half of the 20th century.

Public history is a unique field within history because it is the most active way a historian can work to directly engage him/herself and their research with the public. The public history resources discussed in this section show that 21st century technology has incredible power to provide different communities and people with an outlet for their memories to be told. Archivists, curators, preservationists, and conservationists alike are the agents by which collective memories can be highlighted and disseminated throughout society. These resources are essential ingredients to promoting an informed society because, as sociologists Fine and Beim assert, “memories must

⁴² Ketelaar, McKemish, and Gilliland-Swetland, ““Communities of Memory”: Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas.”

⁴³ Rhoads, “The Historian and the New Technology.”

be made, constructed, negotiated, and reformulated in action. Collective memory is a living concept, linked to the behaviors and responses of social actors who generate meanings.”⁴⁴ Memory exists only as much as it is reinforced and, as was shown in the previous section, there are tremendous consequences when dominant collective memory narratives take precedence over more marginalized stories. Public history scholarship has emphasized the immense capabilities of public historians to influence collective memory. Specifically, Schwartz and Cook (2002) note that archives “wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies.”⁴⁵ In accessing this power, public historians are implicitly cultivating sites of memory by that, as Nora theorized, provide a sense of “temporal anchoring.”⁴⁶ Traditionally, recognized sites of collective memory are only manifested in major institutionalized forms such as city archives and museums, but this thesis contends that technological advances allow for new forms of public history to be utilized with the goal of accessing and presenting more marginalized memories. We assert that digital resources can allow for a new form of “temporal anchoring” in which the past is conceived in its multiplicity. We believe that digital resources have the power to both ground users in the past, while also allowing them the freedom to make their own choices on how they conceptualize past events.

The late 90’s and turn of the century saw a fundamental change in how public historians viewed their ability to subvert the dominant cultural narratives. In 1972, French philosopher Michel Foucault famously argued that the archive was, in effect, “the law that determines what can be said,”⁴⁷ meaning that archives had to be highly selective in what constituted archival material. This was because, as historian Paul Ricoeur asserted, “the idealized and much desired

⁴⁴ Fine and Beim, “Introduction: Interactionist Approaches to Collective Memory.”

⁴⁵ Schwartz and Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power.”

⁴⁶ Nora, “Les Lieux de Mémoire.”

⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

transparent archive revealed itself as a utopian fantasy.”⁴⁸ Public history resources were *meant* to be limited to certain public history scholars, giving each specific historical object that was archived more implicit significance. This conception of public history resources has validity, as what separates a public history resource from just a collection of information and historical objects *is* the selectivity of the public historian in charge of the resource. However, as it became clear near the turn of the 21st century that technology was pushing individuals and communities to become more interconnected, scholarship on public history resources began to reimagine public history itself. In 2002 Jacques Derrida noted that the

“Mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable...the way we experience what we want to keep in memory, or in archive... is conditioned by... the possibility of archiving. So, the archive, the technological power of the archive, determines the nature of what has to be archived.”⁴⁹

In 2002, archivist Brien Brothman argued that new forms of technology had initiated a split in the forms of archiving taken on by public historians. “History’s archivist,” as he labeled it, took the more traditional form of an archivist, primarily concerned with linear narratives about the past told through finding records and uncovering evidence. By contrast, “Memory’s archivist” is interested in the past’s “residue” as material for the promotion of group consciousness and collective memory.⁵⁰ With digital and computer resources, the modern public historian has the capabilities to access and add on to sites of collective memory that give communities a greater share of public consciousness and synthesize Brothman’s two forms of archivists. We hope that CuratAR will be effective in facilitating this synthesis.

⁴⁸ Ricœur, Kelbley, and Rasmussen, *History and Truth*.

⁴⁹ Hamilton, “Archive Fever in South Africa .”

⁵⁰ Brothman B (2001) *The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History and the Preservation of Archival Records*. *Archivaria* (51): 48–80

Collective memory is known to manifest itself in a vast variety of forms: a memorial or museum (Young 1993), visual or print media objects (Bodnar 1992 and Schwartz 2000), a flag or national anthem (Cerulo 1995). Technology brings the public historian far closer to these manifestations of collective memory, allowing him/her to fill in the gaps in public history where the status quo lacks. It is the responsibility of the public historian to seek out and create technological resources that can bridge the gap between the established cultural narratives and disempowered memories. While the contention that collective memory can only be manifested in major institutional structures (the belief most notably held by Schwartz 2009⁵¹) indicates the valid problems of a more democratized form of public history, the vast potential in digital resources is the ability to create *new*, modern institutions of collective memory,⁵² giving “the idea of community, to a democratic public sphere.”⁵³ The subsequent sub-sections will explore how modern public history resources utilize technology to afford marginalized memories new light in the geographical, audio-visual, and educational spaces. These resources are meant to display the possibilities that digital public history resources have in providing “more spaces for public interaction for archives to directly contribute to memory production and propagation.”⁵⁴ CuratAR will build on the subsequent examples of these public history resources to craft its own place in the promotion of marginalized memories.

Audio-Visual Public History Resources

Memory is often best mediated through photographs, films, music, and oral interviews because they harness the sights and sounds of the remembered, or collectively remembered past. Scholars of collective memory and of public history note that audio and visual resources are often

⁵¹ Schwartz 2009 from Beim

⁵² Beim

⁵³ Lalu P (2008) Recalling community, refiguring archive. In: Bennett B, Julius C, Soudien C (eds) City site museum: reviewing memory practices at the District Six Museum. District Six Museum, Cape Town, pp 158–165

⁵⁴ Jacobsen

the key to invoking and expressing collective memories (Chalfen 1986, Kuhn 1995, Hirsch 1997, Van Dijk 2007) because they recreate the “living context”⁵⁵ of the past. Culture itself is highly dynamic, existing as the aggregation of the images and symbols that hold meaning to individuals and communities. It is these cultural objects (photography, film, interview, music) that both unite a group of people and differentiate them from other individuals and groups.⁵⁶ We assert that history emerges from the dynamic nature of culture, and as a result, can never be properly conceived as static. CuratAR has the potential to give space for this dynamism rather than relegating certain memories to being “historically insignificant.” Audio and visual stimuli are, in effect, agents of the preservation and dissemination of memory functioning as triggers for important collective memories. Music, for example, has been proven to exist at the “intersections of personal and collective memory and identity”⁵⁷ because the sonic experience is assigned meaning as collective memories⁵⁸, helping individuals within a community “evolve into social agents.”⁵⁹

Traditionally, archives and museums have been the accepted space for audio-visual cultural objects to be shared with the public, acting as the authoritative cultural medium of collective memory. They are often seen as “fixing” memory, giving the objects, and thus the memories associated with them, “an apparent permanence of the recollected, organized in static time and space.”⁶⁰ However, in a modern, digital, and transcultural world, the singular value of museums and archives has dissuaded. The ability of an archive to establish permanence is challenged by the capabilities of digital resources to help cultural objects of all kinds establish historical significance. While any type of media inherently “undermines the biological, social,

⁵⁵ Berger 1980

⁵⁶ Smith, Antony. 1998. *Nationalism and Modernism*. London: Routledge

⁵⁷ Record and hold: *Popular music between personal and collective memory*

José Van Dijk

⁵⁸ Frith 1996

⁵⁹ Frith, S. (1996). *Performing rites: On the value of popular music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁰ Crane, Susan A., ed. 2000. *Museums and Memory. Cultural Sitings*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

and cultural divisions and distinctions of memory,” digital media allows historians the ability to make cultural objects “endlessly available in the here and now,” establishing a new type of permeance in the broader transcultural context.⁶¹ Digital resources are distinct from traditional archives and museums because their purpose is to be universally available for both collection and dissemination to the public. They have a powerful democratizing effect on the field of public history, but more importantly, on the public’s ability to continuously reimagine their collective memories, and therefore, their collective identities. The following resources are effective examples of how digitization can allow audio and visual cultural objects to be better distributed into the broader collective memory. CuratAR will build on the works of these resources and attempt to provide something new in the field of public history.

Centre National de L’audiovisuel (CNA)

The national audio-visual archive of Luxembourg, the CNA, has been a pioneer in utilizing audio and visual objects to tell national and cultural stories with the goal of forging a stronger national identity. The archivists at the CNA have been tremendously successful in pushing the boundaries of what makes something archivable and have thus created a “central repository for film, photography and sound documents brought together under the rubric of “national heritage.”⁶² The 2009 exhibition, *Hidden Images*, was built on previous work by the CNA in 1995 and attempted to actively engage the Luxembourg public with the archive, giving citizens a pathway to contribute to the national collective memory, thus adding dimensions to larger understandings of national identity. Specifically, the CNA circulated flyers throughout the country asking for submissions of home videos that would be utilized in telling the broader story of the history of the country.

⁶¹ Hoskins A (2011) Media, memory, metaphor: remembering and the connective turn. *Parallax* 17(4): 19–31

⁶² Poos

The project, which was one of the first of its kind to incorporate home movies as archival material, was designed to provide citizens with “a sense of belonging,” thus allowing the archive to be the space where personal, collective, and national memories could be synthesized into the larger story of Luxembourg itself.⁶³ The submissions began coming in 1995 and were fully synthesized in the 2009 exhibit. The project is a testament to the power of non-traditional audio and visual objects to be relevant in the constant construction of national identities and to fully develop their potential as windows into the national collective memory and identity. The CNA provided personal images and home videos the opportunity to “become relevant in a framework of nationhood and identity” because they were collected and presented “as braided or bundled objects and assemblages of objects and relevant practices.”⁶⁴ The CNA harnessed personal memories to help build a synthesized collective national memory that could include all elements of the country’s past.

While the CNA was a pioneer in identifying new types of memory objects that were significant to national history, we believe it may have failed to bring a tangibility to the story of Luxembourg’s past. The memory objects they gathered were housed in a museum that was not easily accessible to the public, which further established the archive as physically apart from the citizenry it serves. A digitization of their archive could be utilized to bring their memory objects to the forefront of people’s minds. This could further emphasize that the national story of Luxembourg was defined by the *varied* stories and submissions of the citizens. CuratAR will build on CNA by including less traditional memory objects in a digital space.

⁶³ Poos

⁶⁴ Mitchell, W. J. T. . 2005a. “There Are No Visual Media.” *Journal of Visual Culture*, —. 2009a. “Photographs and History: Emotion and Materiality.” In *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, edited by Sandra Dudley, London: Routledge, —. 2010. *Doing Family Photography. The Domestic, the Public, and the Politics of Sentiment*. Farnham: Ashgate

Post-Apartheid Archival Projects

Archival projects in post-apartheid South Africa were immensely important in the healing divisions within the country. Oral histories were recognized as integral to fully unearthing the checkered story of South Africa's past and creating a synthesized collective national memory that incorporated the painful experiences of black South Africans. South African archives such as the Oral History of Exiles Project, the Robben Island Museum, Freedom Park, District Six Museum, the Constitution Hill Heritage Project and the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Dialogue, have been the world's leaders in utilizing digital resources to capture and disseminate oral history. One of the first major projects in the mid 1990's, operated by the Mayibuye Center for History and Culture, the Oral History of Exiles recorded over 200 interviews with South Africans that were exiled under apartheid. Fentress and Wickham (1992) argue that the archiving of these personal accounts of life in exile contributed to the growing and new "collective consciousness" within South Africa that rejected the values of apartheid and integrated exiled South Africans back into the collective memory of the nation.⁶⁵

Operated by the Constitution Hill Heritage Project, the site of the former Old Fort Prison in Johannesburg has been home to a new development in utilizing audio-visual resources to form new collective memories. The medium of drawing has proven to be highly effective as a way for former prisoners to explore and share their stories. The drawing, coupled with recorded oral interviews were effective in helping the prisoners reconcile the past and to increase "our understanding of buildings that have disappeared, patterns of punishment and humiliation in the prisons, as well as other deeply complex tissues of memory whose recall gives dignity to the past."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Fentress J, Wickham C (1992) *Social memory*. Blackwell, Oxford

⁶⁶ Madikida C et al (2008) The reconstruction of memory at Constitution Hill. *The Public Hist* 30(1):17-25

Similarly, the Amazwi Abesifazane Memory Cloths Program has been a pioneer in accessing and disseminating the memories of oppressed South African women. The project tasked South African women with constructing “memory cloths” that would be coupled with oral recordings of their experiences during apartheid. The project was attempting to transform archives that included the oral recordings of South African’s experience with apartheid into a “more formal record of South African history.”⁶⁷ These are just some of the examples of the post-apartheid “legacy projects” that were highly significant in the reconstruction of South Africa’s collective memory of its national past. They are beacons of how to utilize archival space to allow for audio-visual objects to become culturally significant in the re-construction of South Africa’s national identity. We hope that CuratAR can become a platform where projects within New Orleans can chart and identify marginalized memories that are significant to its past.

Digitization of Indigenous Collective Memories

Indigenous cultures in America often present a challenge to Western public historians because the collective memories of many indigenous tribes are circulated orally and lack an external permanence that is required in traditional archives. Through a series of interviews with members of tribes in Australia and in America, Historian Lynette Russell has noted that indigenous cultures across continents generally all indicate that story telling has major cultural value within the community; “Telling stories, constructing narratives and talking about the past is invariably regarded as part of knowing oneself, from where they come and to whom they are related.”⁶⁸ Collective memory is found in the oral telling and re-telling of a tribe’s past by community leaders to the subsequent generations. Deborah Lyn Kirk’s 2013 dissertation on the storytelling of the Cherokee Native Americans is one of the best examples of modern technology

⁶⁷ McEwan C (2003) Building a postcolonial archive? Gender, collective memory and citizenship in postapartheid South Africa. *J of South Afr Stud* 29(3):739–757

⁶⁸ 17 Lynette Russell, 'Indigenous Records and Archives: mutual obligations and building trust', paper presented to the ASA 30th Anniversary Seminar, Canberra, 5 April 2005. (To be published in the forthcoming *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 33, no.2, November 2005)

assisting in the re-formation of collective memory for indigenous communities. Her project, which is set up by its analysis of the Smithsonian's James Mooney Archive, asserts that Western archiving fails to fully grasp how the past is perceived in the Cherokee tribe. Utilizing geo-spatial technologies, Kirk created a story-map of Cherokee legends and past that paired oral recordings of tribe leaders with the relevant locations they spoke of. A member of the Cherokee tribe herself, Kirk attempts to "enhance the use of oral tradition among the younger generations who will hear and see the stories...of their landscape and retell these stories in their own words."⁶⁹ Her project is a shining example of how technology can be effective in bringing indigenous stories into the modern age. The consequence of her work is an institutionalization of Cherokee collective memory that both validates the oral tradition of the tribe and allows it to be more easily accessible to the younger generations. While the project was intended specifically for tribe members themselves, it also has tremendous application to the re-imagining of the American national identity with the inclusion of Indigenous tribes in the national story.

We assert that the technology used in Kirk's study has more broad applications than simply within the community. Her model serves as an example of how to work within a community to craft a digital public history resource. We believe that CuratAR will operate similarly to this story-map in its private mode. The malleability of our data model will hopefully allow for communities to define how they want to trace their memories. Kirk's use of geography and digital mapping technology is like the projects discussed in the next sub-section and indicate that digital resources have the capacity to synthesize several types of resources to create archives that fully encapsulate different collective memories.

⁶⁹ Lyn Kirk

Digital Mapping and the Power of Geography in Accessing Collective

Memory

Geography has long been a crucial element in the study of collective memory because physical spaces often serve as the place where collective memory is most overtly celebrated. The physical space is often a trigger for collective memory, but it also contains elements within it that are representative of the past for different communities. Halbwachs spent much of *On Collective Memory* discussing physical spaces as the “locus” of memory,

“The place a group occupies is not like a blackboard, where one may write and erase figures at will...The board could not care less what has been written on it before, and new figures may be freely added. But place and group have each received the imprint of the other. Each aspect, each detail of this place has a meaning intelligible only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it.”⁷⁰

For Halbwachs, the city itself was the physical manifestation of the collective memory of its people: as it changed so too did the memories that flowed through it. The city represents the union of the past and the future, existing presently to remind community members of what has been and what can be to come. Although Halbwachs’ writing discusses physical spaces and geography at length, it was not until the late 20th century that scholars began to engage with his understanding of the physical space’s relationship to memory. Massive changes to city landscapes became a central part of many cities declaring their modernity in the late 20th century, and this “urban clearance” spurred a new generation of scholars’ interest in Halbwachs’ understanding of space and collective memory. Urbanists such as Jane Jacobs and Marshall Berman were deeply

⁷⁰ Halbwachs M, 1980 *The Collective Memory* translated by F J Ditter, V Y Ditter (Harper Colophon, New York); first published in 1950

unnerved by the urban clearance movement and began the urbanist preservation movement as a response to the results of modern urban clearance projects.⁷¹ Jacobs and Berman became contributors to preservationism, a much larger intellectual movement that had long been at the center of public history studies.

Preservationism as an academic discipline has existed since the 17th century and preservationist scholars have long viewed themselves as stewards of historic environments, preserving “cultural history sites” as a way of protecting the interests of future generations by respecting the people and places of the past. They assert that everyday locations contain the meanings of history and the past within the landscape and architecture. Preservationism is most generally defined as the preservation, restoration, and renovation of structures to their authentic sites because it views historic structures as the “authentic fabric of neighborhoods and cities.”⁷² While preservationism does serve an important public purpose in allowing people who visit preserved sites to “get in touch with history” as Barthel (1996) notes, preservationists are inherently limited by what they are allowed to preserve. The history that is then presented to the public is mediated by the elements of the past that preservationists deem worthy of their work. Boyer (1994), Hayden (1997), and Walton (2001) have all explored the limiting consequences preservationism has had on accessing more marginalized collective memories. Where preservationism fails to harness the inherent collective memories existent in physical spaces, geography scholars have attempted to fill in the gaps. We still assert that preservationism has an essential place in public history, but as cities evolve and modernize, we believe digital resources such as ours can act as pseudo-preservationists. However, in doing so we also assert that we will need to alter our conception of preservationism to include more diverse perspectives on memory and the past.

⁷¹ Hebbert

⁷² Milligan

In their study of commemorative and historic landscapes, geographers assume a similar framework to Halbwachs, asserting that human memory is inherently spatial. Physical space is seen as expressing group identity through “architectural order, monuments and symbols, commemorative sites, street names, civic spaces.”⁷³ They employ the “text” and “arena” approaches to their analyses of physical spaces as they relate to social identity and collective memory. While the “arena” approach focuses on the capacity of the physical space to serve as the home for debate among social groups about the meaning of their histories, the “text” approach seeks to examine the histories of silenced groups and reinscribe their collective memory back into the commemorative spaces that have meaning to them.⁷⁴ The “text” approach is particularly relevant in the modern age, as digital mapping technology allows geographers and cartographers to awaken marginalized memories and transpose them on digital versions of physical space. When the extent to which physical spaces have been altered makes them unrecognizable to certain memories of that space, it is digital mapping that allows geography and public history scholars to, in effect, travel back in time.

In the 21st century, digital mapping has proven to be a highly effective resource for public historians to harness collective memory, but it does have significant limitations. It is important to briefly discuss these limitations as this thesis will go on to discuss contemporary examples of digital mapping projects. The concluding section of this thesis will also explore how CuratAR will use digital mapping technology, and the limitations of the software discussed here will shape the creation of our tool. In her analysis of digital mapping software, geographer Sarah Elwood writes of the tremendous potential of digital mapping, noting that resources as simple as Google Maps are “active contributors to narratives about specific places and their history.” In the same breath, she warns that digital mapping technology and spatial technology can “enforce a

⁷³ Hebbert

⁷⁴ Alderman and Dwyer

structured and calculative ordering of time, space and experience through the ways that databases and software store, retrieve and organize information” and “render memories more permanent and also harder for any single entity to control.”⁷⁵ Elwood’s warnings do have validity, but this thesis asserts that the strength of any digital resource is that it takes power away from any singular entity of preservation. This allows for the democratization of historical information and makes it easier for the personal and collective memories of marginalized groups to be afforded historical significance by the wider public. The following public history resources are potent examples of how digital mapping technology can be a resource for harnessing collective memories.

Urban Tapestries and City of Memory Projects

Created in 2002, the Urban Tapestries Project sought to investigate how early digital mapping technologies could be used to promote public authoring (the mapping and sharing of local knowledge, memories, stories, sensed information, and experiences) to synthesize urban narratives into one easy-to-use place. Sponsored by the independent art studio Proboscis, Urban Tapestries was one of the first technologies to utilize digital resources to give ordinary people an opportunity to contribute to an open-source database that helped tell the story of their city. Utilizing geographic information systems (GIS) and ubicomp technology, the Urban Tapestry project asked users to utilize their mobile phones to log and map their knowledge and experience of the city. At the core of the project was a goal of accessing social knowledge that is not available in traditional databases. The UT creators used the example of the limiting reality of museums and galleries to illustrate the potential of their software, “With public authoring, we can easily imagine digitally annotated alternative interpretations that challenge an institution’s

⁷⁵ Elwood

position and that the institution wouldn't permit being stated within its physical domain."⁷⁶ UT's goal was to give its users the ability to define physical spaces as their own without having to alter the space itself, as preservationism and public history often requires. It was a ground-breaking study into the vast potential of digital mapping to give the public a chance to author stories and knowledge of their own into their home cities. UT was clearly limited by the constraints of the technology of its time as users did not have an interface that was easy to work with. Digital phones were not in the place they are today, and CuratAR will benefit from the existence of phones that are user-friendly in allowing for the types of submissions we will be utilizing. UT serves as a potent example of how even in the beginning of the digital age, researchers were looking at the potential of digital mapping for public purposes. CuratAR will serve to contribute to this ever-growing field.

Like UT, the City of Memory Project utilizes an open-source forum to invite users to contribute their own interpretations and knowledge to the larger collective memory of New York City. The project originated during an interactive exhibition at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in which visitors utilized pushpins to highlight significant locations in the folk culture of New York City. After seven years of development, the City of Memory Project debuted as an online map of personal stories and memories organized on a geographical map of New York City.⁷⁷ Residents and visitors of New York City can utilize the online map to move through the city with curated tours by theme or neighborhood. Users can also create their own tours that are related to their specific interest and personal memories of New York City's past. Both UT and the City of Memory Project are pertinent examples of digital software that places the power of storytelling in the hands of the public rather than major institutions. Their usage of open-source

⁷⁶] Angus, A., Lane, G., Martin, K., West, N., Thelwall, S., Papadogkonas, D., Papamarkos, G., Roussos, G., Sujon, Z. and Silverstone, R. 2008. Urban Social Tapestries. *Pervasive Computing*. IEEE. 7, 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2008), 44-51

⁷⁷ The StoryMapping project. from <http://www.storymapping.org/resources.html>

software is a shining example of how digital technology can fully democratize the creation and circulation of public history. Their accomplishments in the public history field are proof of the value of the work CuratAR will do.

Roteiro de Consciência do Brasil (Brazilian Road Map)

Created in 2021 and sponsored by various autonomous social organizations, the *Roteiro de Consciência do Brasil* is one of the newest digital resources that attempts to harness collective memory. The project was inspired to give the opportunity to Brazilians to tell stories of their experience of the military regime as current institutional structures in Brazil do not provide most Brazilians with this opportunity. The project seeks to reconcile the personal memories of people directly oppressed by the military regime with the collective national memory of the regime thus creating an “emergent digital network memory.”⁷⁸ The maps generated “places of memories, articulate individual and collective memories, aiming to reconcile or, more specifically, repair the recent history of the country.”⁷⁹ Powered by Google Maps, the digital cartographies are used to build alternate historical narratives to the dominant government-led narrative, overlaying older maps with the current maps to show the impact of the military regime on the physical landscapes of Brazil with the renaming of streets and the disappearance of known community members. The maps serve as “magnifying glasses that increase the visibility of those who have less prominence in the official narrative of history.”⁸⁰ This project, which lacks sponsorship from any governmental or major institutional structures shows that digital mapping has the tremendous power to subvert government oppression and expand understandings of collective national memory. The digital space allows Brazilians to reclaim their own home cities, resisting popular narratives that marginalize certain peoples and groups. The impacts of this project remain to be

⁷⁸ Hoskins 2009

⁷⁹ Martins

⁸⁰ Martins

seen, but we are excited by the possibilities it provides. Its connection to CuratAR is primarily in its application of Google Maps, a process we hope to replicate for our own project.

Section IV: Applications of Collective Memory for the Future: CuratAR

Working with Professor Felipe Cruz and with the assistance of Newcomb Tulane College undergraduate grants, we will create our own digital resource, CuratAR, that ties historical information and artifacts directly to location. The goal of this project is to harness the memories of marginalized groups in New Orleans to give them proper space in the broader collective memory of New Orleans' past. We do not believe there can be one unified story of the past of New Orleans and we hope to create a resource that reflects this range of memories and conceptions of New Orleans' past. This project has the power to give a voice to marginalized groups while also directly engaging the New Orleans public with its own city. We assert that CuratAR has the power to solve many of the conflicts that exist in New Orleans between preservationism and progress. Preservationist organizations in New Orleans such as the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) are often in conflict with the city's desire for urban development projects. The New Orleans city government is tasked with maintaining a balance of progress and preservation because heritage tourism of the architecture of New Orleans makes up a sizable portion of the economy. The resulting effect is that preservation is often seen as "opposing progress" and holding the city back.⁸¹ We believe CuratAR can mend the divide between preservationism and progress, allowing for the city to continue to evolve while also maintaining the cultural value of New Orleans' past. We recognize that preservationists may oppose this project because they assert that historic buildings have inherent historic value and can "speak for themselves."⁸² We urge the preservationist lobby to recognize the ability of digital mapping and AR (Augmented Reality) technology to contribute to the broader narrative of New Orleans' past. Furthermore, we assert that standard preservationist institutions lack the ability to incorporate the public itself in forming the collective memory of

⁸¹ Elliot 2004 from Milligan

⁸² Fine and Beim

New Orleans. We believe that our digital resource can be a key in providing New Orleanians the agency to define their own past.

Professor Cruz's experience with open source databasing will be the mechanism we use to log historical information from museums, archives, local collections, cultural affairs offices, and individuals themselves. Using GPS and AR technology, we will then tie this information to their relevant locations so that any person with our resource can learn about the places they walk through every day. CuratAR hopes to build on the progress made by the digital resources discussed in this thesis, using them as examples of how to utilize a digital resource to create a participatory dynamic between the public and history. We also hope that this resource can contribute to the reimagining of archival education and to the larger educational field of Collective Memory Work (CMW), created by sociologist Frigga Haug. We believe our resource can be a helpful tool in the application of this method of education.

Collective memory is best examined when memories of the past are democratized rather than controlled by major institutional structures. Our project seeks to provide a lens into the past through a connection to present locations. In doing so, we will create a place where collective and cultural memory goes through a process of continuous updates from all diverse types of historical archives and collections. We believe that a digital historical resource that takes an active role in including individual memories will serve communities by helping them to reimagine their own historical and collective memories.

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