

Overview Ethical Approaches to Archiving Social Media



Digital**Preservation**Coalition

What is 'Ethics'?

What makes something ethical?

Ethics



- Not the same thing as The Law
- Difficult to enforce in principle
- BUT should inform values and policies
- One size does not fit all
- No objective rules or absolute truth
- BUT some shared principles and community agreements
- Change and adapt to context and new information

Platform



Facebook –
mostly private
accounts, more
personal info
shared



Flickr, YouTube,
SoundCloud –
audiovisual content
shared that may
contain copyright



Twitter – more
public accounts,
less personal info
shared



Instagram –
private & public
accounts with
some copyright
content

User Awareness & Consent

User Awareness

- Are social media users aware of how platforms use and share their data?
- Are they aware of how researchers or other 3rd parties might use their data?

Ipsos MORI: 38% of the public are aware their social media posts are potentially being analysed for research projects

Consent

- Does a User Agreement tick box really indicate consent?
- Does this type of collection require *informed* consent?
- What level of risk is created?

Labels!

S O C I A L
H U M A N S

Ownership & Authorship



- Who does this collection belong to?
 - Who is entitled to curate, preserve, and share it?
 - Who creates the metadata to support how it should be interpreted?
- Michelle Caswell's Feminist Standpoint Appraisal**
- Inverts dominant appraisal hierarchies that value records created by those in power at the expense of records created by the oppressed to document and resist their oppression
 - Unapologetically assigns value to records created and preserved by those individuals and communities oppressed by capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy
 - Shifts our thinking about the position of the archivist, from a “view from nowhere” towards a socially located, culturally situated agent

Example: Documenting the Now



Challenges to preserving social media content in ethical ways that protect already marginalized people:

- Lack of user awareness – or informed consent – about how platforms use their data
- Potential for fraudulent use and manipulation of social media content
- Heightened potential of harm for members of marginalized communities
- Increased risk associated with activities such as civil disobedience, traditionally heavily monitored by law enforcement
- Difficulty of applying traditional archival practices given the sheer volume of data and complicated logistics of interacting with content creators

Economics of Access

- Barriers to accessing and sharing social media data due to monetisation of social media data
- Benefits for-profit corporations and a handful of well-funded (and well-connected) institutions
- Prevents collecting organisations from fulfilling their duty to look after and make available collections to users (researchers, policy-makers, the public)

**New Economic
Order**

'Data Haves'

&

'Data Have Nots'

*Puschmann and
Burgess, 'The Politics of
Twitter Data (2014)*

Summary



- Platform - technology & functionality
- User Awareness & Consent
- Ownership & Authorship
- Economics of Access
- How does the way this platform functions affect ethical preservation?
- How does the form and use of this content affect ethical preservation?
- Are users aware their data is being harvested for this purpose or stored in this location?
- Can I feasibly let them know and how?
- Who owns this content and how can the community be enabled and empowered to make their own archival decisions?
- How does the disparity of access to social media data affect my institution's ability to fulfil its purpose or legal remit?

Ethical Deliberation: To Archive Twitter or Not to Archive Twitter

- Each group is assigned a proposition regarding the ethical viability of archiving Twitter data
- Each group must develop a set of arguments to defend their assigned proposition
- At the end, each group will share their arguments with the whole group
- If time allows, delegates will anonymously vote for the most persuasively argued proposition using Mentimeter