ARCHINODES

Collect. Curate. Collaborate.

WHAT WE'RE BUILDING

Archinodes is an archiving system for everyday collectors and curators. It provides an archival space for individuals, groups, and communities to collect and document their digital and physical artifacts. Using a playful and intuitive interface, users can organize their artifacts into themed collections and visualize their archive as exhibitions. It allows users to interact with the collections of others and to share their artifacts in collaborative collections. This process of sharing one's personal archive renders visible one's participation in a living archive.

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WHY WE'RE BUILDING IT

We are collectors and we believe that collecting is important – providing evidence of our memories, keeping record of our experiences, and giving us contact with the past.

People collect things because they are important to them. Some artifacts are culturally revered; these are often put in museums, libraries, and archives. Other artifacts are personally cherished; collected to be remembered. Whether under glass at a national archives, or stored in a shoebox under a bed, these collections say something about us. We're telling a story about who we are, from where we have come, and what is important to us.

We are building Archinodes to help people tell meaningful stories with the things they collect.

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YOU SHOULD HAVE A BETTER ARCHIVE.

Social networking platforms have come to dominate the way in which we present and share our personal stories with friends, within communities, and to the public at large. Though often poorly equipped to do so, these platforms are quickly becoming our de facto archives – the repositories of our memories and social interactions.

With unprecedented amounts of content being generated on these platforms, archiving is becoming more challenging than ever. Archivists are being presented with a fragmented digital landscape while individuals are being tasked with the job of archiving, albeit with inadequate tools. Most archival schemas replicate traditional priorities, which however important to institutions, do not serve the needs of individuals seeking a meaningful way to share their collections. Little has been done to connect users to their personal archives in a way that is playful, manageable, interactive, and beautiful.

We want to help people create meaningful experiences with the things they collect.

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YOU SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE PAST.

Social networking applications like Facebook or Twitter privilege what's happening now and relegate the past to obscurity. Reverse-chronological order has become the standard mode for displaying content. Whether stored deep in Facebook's Timeline or at the bottom of an infinitely scrolling stream of Tweets, accessing the past demands a frustrating form of digital archeology – a laborious digging through one's history. This emphasis on the present comes at the expense of being able to understand and visualize the totality of one's archive .

Archinodes serves to contrast the temporal nature of information on the web by allowing users to draw connections between the past and the present, encouraging an ongoing engagement with one's personal archive. More than just a repository storing the past, Archinodes allows users to dynamically manipulate the display of their collections, offering an assortment of criteria to visualize their archive.

We believe that facilitating interactions with these materials challenges the perception of the archive as static and will enrich the experiences users can create with their collections.

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YOU SHOULD BE IN CONTROL OF YOUR CONTENT.

Archives are moving to the cloud. Users are asked to hand over their content to 3rd party services in good faith, trusting that their data will forever be accessible. Services shut down, deleting our digital histories. Our memories and interactions – in the form of the photos, videos, and words – are stored on privately owned servers and are being used to drive traffic and sell advertisements. The backlash that ensues each time Facebook or Twitter changes their Terms of Service is evidence of a growing awareness amongst users of the value of their personal data and the importance of rights management online. Yet their continued popularity is testament to the lack of alternatives.

Archinodes serves a growing desire amongst creators to be in control of their stories and how they are being told. Users should have control over how and by whom their content is accessed, as well as how it is stored – both online and offline. We acknowledge that there is no single solution to digital storage, but providing multiple preservation options and allowing users the agency to determine their own method of storage will afford them the freedom to participate confidently in building a rich archive.

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WHAT IT WILL DO

Archinodes will allow users to create ARTIFACTS, organize them into COLLECTIONS, and foster COLLABORATIONS with others. The application will provide an elegant, intuitive, and playful user experience for the management of one's archive.

ARTIFACTS

The physical or digital objects that we archive: images, video, audio, texts or documents. Alone, an artifact is an object or moment documented in time and space. It can be private or shared. Artifacts are the unique pieces of a story within a collection, interacting with the other pieces and the people who engage with them.

COLLECTIONS

Collections are groups of artifacts. They function as a single capsule containing artifacts relating to a particular topic or theme. They can contain a finite amount of artifacts or grow infinitely over time. A collection could be an album, a journal, a portfolio, an event, a trip, a community, or any other group of related artifacts imagined. A collection provides the space for artifacts and their creators to interact.

COLLABORATIONS

Collaborations are the interactions between users. Whether contributing artifacts or participating in a dialogue about a collection, collaborations are the connections between users and the artifacts they share. Collaborators could be friends, family, colleagues, or strangers – anyone you encounter within the archive is a potential collaborator. These relationships form the Archinodes community.

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Archinodes will provide a number of features to facilitate the management of one's personal archive.

ARCHIVING

Users can import and collect artifacts. The system will allow for both the backlogging of batched data sets in a wide variety of media formats, as well as the ongoing collection of new materials.

CURATING

Users can create and display themed collections, organizing their artifacts and allowing them to be viewed in the context of time or space, or in relation to one other.

SHARING

Users can manage access to their individual artifacts and collections, allowing them to maintain a granular level of control over the visibility of their content and enabling specific artifacts and collections to be shared with individuals, groups, or the public.

EXHIBITION

Users can present their collection in the form of public exhibitions, allowing the collection to be accessed via a unique vanity URL and be promoted beyond the Archinodes community.

COLLABORATION

Users can collaborate on the creation and curation of collections, allowing them to make artifacts available to be used by others as well as participate in the conversation of shared collections.

SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

Users can import and archive content from their existing social media accounts as well as publish artifacts and collections to their social networks.

PRESERVATION

Users can automatically synchronize files to a remote server or local hard drive. Access to a local copy of one's archive will allow users to browse and manage these files offline. These backups provides flexible options to allow users to ensure their archive is safe and preserved.

EXPORTABILITY

Users can access data from their archive, made available in exportable formats through a public API. This ability to access one's data frees the content of one's archive and allows it to be used in creative and as of yet unforeseen ways.

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HOW IT'S DIFFERENT

Archinodes is a space to document, share, and exhibit: it designed for collectors.

We know our audience is specific. We want to serve those who are passionate about collecting and the things they collect. We share their concerns about the permanence of their collections and understand the desire to be in control of one's content. We understand how important these artifacts are to them. We are building Archinodes to help them tell compelling stories with the things they collect.

Archinodes shares features with many applications that already exist, helping people collect things, preserve them, publish them, tell stories about them, and connect with others. For most people looking to accomplish these tasks individually, there are already many ways to do it. And while there are existing applications that support these features, Archinodes differentiates itself from the rest in many important ways.

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DIGITAL ARCHIVING SYSTEMS

Archinodes is an archiving system, but it's not just for traditional archivists; it's for everyday collectors. It gives individuals who care about the things they collect the ability to manage and build their personal archive using a beautiful, intuitive, and playful interface.

Several digital archiving systems are used by museums, libraries, and universities to preserve and index digital materials. In prioritizing archival standards and metadata schemas over a compelling user experience, they are often inaccessible to everyday collectors and fail to encourage engagement with one's archive.

PUBLISHING PLATFORMS

Archinodes is publishing platform, but it's not a blog; it's a platform to allow users to create stories with the things they curate. It doesn't require users to write posts to tell their story, but allows stories to be told through the artifacts they collect – and it allows more stories to emerge when we share them with each other.

There is a plethora of existing services that provide a hosted solution to allow users to publish on the web. These services allow users to create websites and predominantly display their content in a reverse-chronological order. While they lower the barriers to participation and make publishing on the web easy, they offer little means for people to organize and contextualize the things they create.

CURATION TOOLS

Archinodes is a curation tool, but it's not a bookmarking service; it allows for collaborative curation.

There are several services that allow users to collect and republish content from the web, curating multiple sources and integrating social media content to tell a story or create a collection of related content. While these services allow their users to curate, they focus on existing web content, not encouraging original user content to be uploaded and archived.

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PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS

Archinodes is a productivity tool, but it doesn't exist to make your life easier; it exists to document the life that you are living. There are many applications that can help you manage your grocery list; Archinodes can tell a story of the meal you shared.

There is a constellation of personal productivity tools that aim to help users collect and store information, organizing it and making it retrievable in the future. While these tools may help their users accomplish tasks, keep organized, and work efficiently, they do not provide a place to share meaningful experiences with the data they collect.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Archinodes is a social network, but it is not concerned with your status; it is concerned with the things you want to collect and stories you want to tell. It's a place to connect with other like-minded collectors. While many applications allow users to just share what is happening now, Archinodes allows users to share what is happened and why it is important.

Social networking services allow users to interact with each other. While these networks become archives by default, they offer limited control over how content can be shared and their reverse chronological display emphasizes what is happening in real time. Their limited metadata also makes navigating and exploring these archives difficult. As these services entrench themselves in their users' social lives, they become larger and larger repositories of data without offering control over how it is accessed, displayed, and preserved.

facebook.

twitter

Instagram

Pinterest

USER EXPERIENCE

Archinodes is a space to engage with the things we collect – to situate them in time and space,, to organize and present them in a compelling manner, and to collaborate with other collectors. To this end, the user experience is paramount. The visual representation of one's archive will allow users to understand the scope of their collections and the connections between their artifacts. In considering its design, we are seeking to create an interface that is ethical, purposeful, pragmatic, and elegant.

ETHICAL It serves the user and their desire to create, without seeking to mislead or trick the user into doing something they don't want to do

PRAGMATIC It is efficient, allowing the user to feel capable and effective by providing a set of user interactions that are immediately familiar.

PURPOSEFUL It serves the functions of the application, allowing the user to focus on the task they came to accomplish without distraction

ELEGANT It is a pleasure to use, providing a beautiful and compelling user experience that encourages discovery, creativity and playfulness.

The platform will be designed with touch interfaces in mind, offering a tactility that mirrors one's interaction with physical objects while remaining accessible through traditional point and click interfaces. It will employ consistent and familiar gestures throughout, allowing the application to be efficient and easy to use. It will incorporate responsive design principles to make one's archive accessible across a variety of devices and screen sizes. The interactions should encourage creation and exploration. Above all, the archive should provide a suitable home for these artifacts we cherish.

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WHAT WILL YOU COLLECT?

Because it provides its users with a flexible feature set to serve the collector, Archinodes can be used to collect, organize, and share artifacts for wide variety purposes.

Artists can document their work in progress and share their artwork in a portfolio.

Academics can collect their research materials and share published papers.

Families can document a vacation, sharing pictures, locations, and travel notes with each other.

Small businesses can document the items in their inventory.

Chefs can document and share their recipes, menus, and reviews of their dishes.

Social clubs can document their events and achievements, sharing them with their members.

Conference organizers can document their presentations and submitted papers to share with attendees.

Builders can document a construction project, from design to reality.

Musicians can document their live performances.

Sports fans can document and share their sports memorabilia collection.

Cultural organizations can document the history of their community.

Given the flexibility of its architecture, the possibilities are vast. As users collect and share their artifacts, new types of collections will emerge and unforeseen uses of the platform will come to light. What will you collect?

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WHO WE ARE

Archinodes was founded in 2010 by Mél Hogan, Paul Juricic, and Jeff Traynor. The three of us met in the Media Studies Masters program at Concordia University in Montréal. Together, our varied academic and technical backgrounds inform the way we understand effective communication and design. With more than 20 years of combined experience in media production and media theory that bridges the worlds of academia and the creative industries, we offer a specialized purview that we believe affords us insight and expertise into issues surrounding creative production and archiving in a networked world.

MÉL HOGAN

Trained as a graphic designer, Mél has expanded her areas of expertise to a range of media practices, culminating in a research-creation Doctorate in Communication (Concordia University, Montreal). She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in Digital Curation at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research now revolves around the environmental impacts of data streams and server farms, through the lens of the postmodern archive. Mél is a curator at the Media Archaeology Lab and the Brakhage Center for the Media Arts at CU, Boulder. She is also on the Board of Studio XX and of the Fembot Collective.

PAUL JURICIC

With a focus on non-linear storytelling, database narratives, and organizational communications, Paul's academic background in Communication Studies (BA) and Media Studies (MA) has brought together practical and theoretical applications of media. As a co-founder of Archinodes, Paul provides graphic design, UX design, research design, project management, and organizational archival strategy. Paul participates in projects that seek to foster unique meanings through purposeful and accessible design. He makes things in Vancouver, BC.

JEFF TRAYNOR

With a background in Communication and Media Studies, Jeff has applied his understanding of communication technologies as a web developer, project manager, and communications consultant. An advocate for open source technologies, he has been involved within the Drupal community since 2007. Jeff has worked with a wide range of clients, including artists, academics, environmental activists, and political organizations. Jeff currently lives in Washington, DC.

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This document was prepared for a meeting with Matthew Kirschenbaum, Trevor Muñoz and Porter Olsen at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities on August 13th, 2013.

For additional information about Archinodes, please visit archinodes.com or contact us at info@archinodes.com

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