

# ARCHINODES



Process Documents

## PRESENTATION INFORMATION

The Designer's Archive: A Process-Oriented Approach  
Presented to the Regional State Archives and  
School of Design and Crafts University of Gothenburg  
April 16, 2013

This document accompanies a talk given by Archinodes via VoIP.

## READING THIS DOCUMENT

Created to document our design thinking and to establish points of reference for discussion, this document is organized as a collection of numbered items, each indicating if specific action is required.

- ..... ● A solid dot is used to represent evidence, facts, or observations related to the project which can be referenced and serve to provide context to the discussion.
- ..... ○ Whereas an empty dot is used to represent specific questions, concepts or recommendations where we are specifically seeking your feedback.

This presentation will describe Mél Hogan, Paul Juricic and Jeff Traynor's work through the Archinodes Research Design Lab, reflecting on how creative processes translate into design thinking and doing. Much of their work builds off of a re-vision of the archive, and as such emphasizes documentation and visual traces of collaboration.

JEFF TRAYNOR (1979, Canada) With an academic background in Communication Studies and Media Studies, Jeff has applied his critical understanding of communication technology as a web developer, project manager, and communications consultant. Jeff is an advocate for open source technologies and 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.

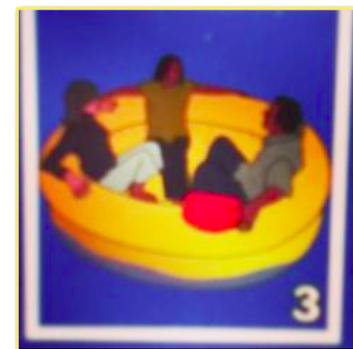
PAUL JURICIC (1977, Canada) With a focus on non-linear storytelling, database narratives and representations of efficiency, Paul's academic background in Communication Studies (BA) and Media Studies (MA) was facilitated through both practical and theoretical applications. As a co-founder of Archinodes, Paul provides support in graphic design, UX design, research design, project management, and communication consultation. Paul participates in projects that seek to foster unique meanings through purposeful design. Paul lives and creates in Vancouver, BC.

MÉL HOGAN (1977, Canada) is doing a two-year research fellowship (postdoc) in digital curation in the department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado – Boulder. Her research revolves around the failures of the (promise of the) archive, data storage centers, feminist media archaeologies, and the politics of preservation. As a practitioner, aspects of these same issues are addressed through media arts interventions and research design projects. She is also the art director of online and p.o.d. journal of arts and politics, [nomorepotlucks.org](http://nomorepotlucks.org); on the advisory board of the Fembot collective; on the administrative board Studio XX; a new curator for the Media Archaeology Lab, and a research design consultant for [archinode.com](http://archinode.com).

## SEEDS OF COLLABORATION

1.01 The three of us met while pursuing an MA in Media Studies at Concordia University in Montréal.

1.02 All of us were working on research projects that involved a creative production component. These projects are now called research-creation projects at the university, an approach to research that is spreading across the digital humanities, media and communication studies and media arts in particular.



<http://archinodes.com/node/157>

- 1.03 Research-creation is not only about 'deliverables' produced as an end point of traditional methodologies, but rather, offer a reflection on how digital methods, and ways of working, inform research outcomes. Following grad school, we continued to push this concept forward.
- 1.04 We believe in deep design, that is, in the conversation between technologies at our disposal and the message being communicated. Design is never simply a layer. Design is integral to communication.
- 1.05 We each had specific backgrounds that also informed the way we understand effective communication through design.
- 1.06 Back when we started, many websites were still being built as a series of static HTML pages, created and edited by a "webmaster" who served as a gatekeeper for content production.
- 1.07 Today, open source content management systems account for millions of websites on the internet, ranging from personal websites to large corporate websites.

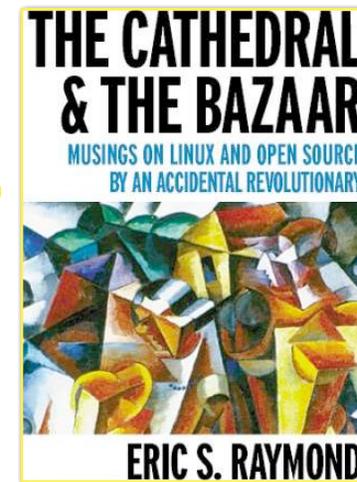


WORDPRESS



Joomla!™

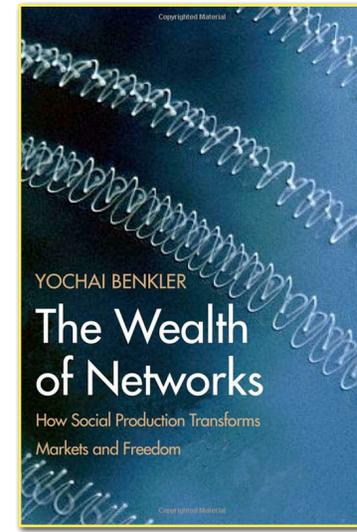
- 1.08 Originally written as a private message board system, Dries Buytaert released the Drupal content management system as an open source project in 2001.
- 1.09 Being an open-source project, anyone was welcome to modify, build upon, and extend the functionality of the codebase.
- 1.10 The *Cathedral and the Bazaar* (1999) outlines 19 guidelines for creating good open source software; the first being that, "Every good work of software starts by scratching a developer's personal itch."
- 1.11 A large community of developers coalesced around Drupal, each using it to scratch their own personal itch.



- 1/12 ● To accommodate the many different personal interest, Drupal adopted a modular architecture, allowing distinct functionalities to be written and plugged into Drupal as contributed modules.
- 1/13 ● This is an example of what Yochai Benkler called "commons-based peer production," a production model in which the the creative energies of many people are coordinated without traditional organizational hierarchies.

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- 1/14 ● These principles of commons-based peer production model extended beyond the creation of the CMS codebase. The CMS invited participation from non-technical users, allowing those without knowledge of HTML to participate in the creation of content.
- 1/15 ● With a large community of open source developers creating modular functionalities, it made it possible for non-programmers to not only create web content, but participate in building websites and web applications.
- 1/16 ● Drupal was strengthened by this expansion of its network and the inclusion of different voices, backgrounds and experiences.
- 1/17 ● In basic network theory, *nodes* are distinct points in a network, connected by *ties* along which information *flows*.
- 1/18 ● In Drupal's architecture, individual pieces of content are called "nodes."
- 1/19 ● When understood as a collection of inter-related nodes, the website can be understood as a living archive.
- 1/20 ● In the early days of our partnership we adopted the motto, "Every Node Matters."
- 1/21 ● While many proprietary systems require the user to adopt its logic of content production, an open source, modular content management system like Drupal allowed us develop custom tools that served both the content and user.



## THE ARCHIVE

- 1/22 ● Another aspect that is fundamental to our approach is the archive, which is also evidenced in our name... the “archi.”
- 1/23 ● One of the requests we get the most often at Archinodes is to build “archives” for a range of (mostly) academic projects.
- 1/24 ● At its most utopian, the archive online can serve as a potentially large store of information in which video, audio, text and image files are linked together and organized to specify relationships between assets.
- 1/25 ● Online, users can participate in the creation of the archive itself (CMS), not only in terms of access but often through user-generated content creation, open tagging (folksonomies), and by appropriating and remixing content as a form of review or criticism.
- 1/26 ● The online archive can also be layered: it can be open, and run collectively, or layers of access can determine roles and permissions.
- 1/27 ● Notable scholars, artists and practitioners have contributed to this revision of the archive, notably:
- Indigenous intellectual property scholar, Jane Anderson, argues that provenance privileges authorship through ownership and thus demonstrates how the documenter, not the documented, claims ownership of the media it collects, and in turn, is likely to control its context and circulation. <http://nomorepotlucks.org/site/colonial-archives-and-copyright-law>
  - Cultural theorist, Ramesh Srinivasan, argues that “through sustained, embedded, and ongoing partnerships with local communities, technologies can be inscribed with other types of meanings, ones that computationally express a different set of ethical values, and consider diverse practices of making and sharing knowledge.” <http://rameshsrinivasan.org/code-and-culture/>
  - Mukurtu CMS. Cultural protocols are at its core; they allow users to determine fine-grained levels of access to digital heritage materials based on cultural needs. Sharing protocols make it possible to define a range of access levels for digital heritage objects and collections, from completely open to strictly controlled, for groups and individual members of a community. <http://www.mukurtu.org>

See also:  
Tess Takahashi, Wendy H. K. Chun,  
Walid Ra’ad, Geert Lovink, Anjali  
Arondekar, Jussi Parikka, Lori Emerson,  
Amma Y. Gharthey-Tagoe Kootin and  
Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten.



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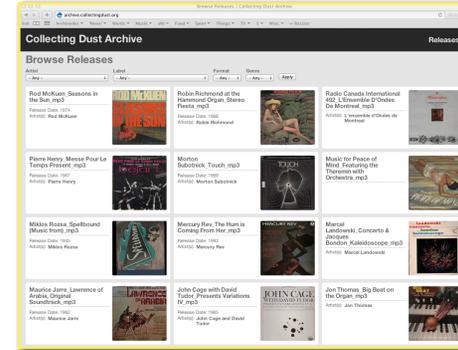
Space-driven: maps and trajectory



<http://archinodes.com/node/138>



<http://archinodes.com/node/101>



<http://archive.collectingdust.org>

1/33

As metadata

1/34

an exhibition space

1/35

a remix space keeping materials alive by way of remix and redistribution; also opening up a sharing economy

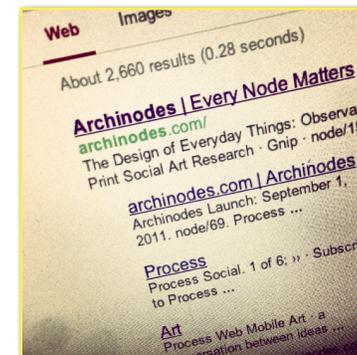
1/36

a process-oriented space (less like a palimpsest, more as a transparent medium)

1/37

What can an archive do?

- archive design can offer a link between memory, documentation and communication
- allows us to move away from the idea of websites as websites with pages, toward canvas, timelines, maps, etc., as greater metaphors
- subversion of social media as a means of storytelling
- provide a self-reflexive approach



<http://archinodes.com/>

- 1/38 ○ Questions for conceptualizing an archive online:
- who will access the archive? (who is the primary audience?)
  - are there sensitive or private materials that should not be made public online?
  - will some materials be for internal use only?
  - how are layers of access determined?
  - how are formats determined, will different formats be offered, or varying quality versions of the same content, for different purposes?
  - how will people search/discover your assets?
  - how will you license your materials (will a Creative Commons license be used?)
  - how/will the archive grow? who will maintain it?
  - what kind of metadata, if any, should accompany assets?
  - will the archive be shaped by user activity?
  - will your data be visualized?
  - is there a material counterpart to your archive? (if so, what will be the relationship to such material artefacts?)

## ARCHIVING DOCUMENTS: THE DOCUMENT AS ARCHIVE

- 1/39 ● In creating Archinodes we've sought to foster a tangible virtual space where we can collaborate with our clients and partners.
- 1/40 ● The desire towards collaboration came about through a combination of experience, push-back from clients, and a consciousness about the transformation of the 'creative' in the production model.
- 1/41 ● The democratization of creative production has challenged the agency of the expert as evidenced by the countless examples blurring boundaries between the amateur and the professional:
- bloggers v. journalists
  - youtube v. record companies
  - mobile phones v. photography
  - etc...etc...etc
- 1/42 ● Tied to the amateur's sense of creative agency is both a need and understanding of how to communicate (or brand and sell) oneself.

- 1/43 ● Relying on our intimate relationship with post-war consumer culture has given us all a keener sense of how information is communicated.
- 1/44 ● Whereas once only the Mad Men had the knowhow to sell a message, now an individual running their own small business has Madison Avenue in their hearts and most of its resources and their fingertips.
- 1/45 ● An increased skepticism, if not distrust, of professionalism in the wake of international scandals in business, banking and politics, has further challenged the professional arts.
- 1/46 ● Convincing an increasingly tech and design-savvy client to embrace novel approaches (when they have access and familiarity with successful, albeit often antiquated approaches) is a formidable challenge.
- 1/47 ○ How then, do we, as supposed design communication experts, find relevance amidst the rise of the amateur?
- 1/48 ● Some relevance can be found in a reliance on our multidisciplinary backgrounds.
- 1/49 ● For us, a first step was to accept the broadened creative acumen of our clients to be the new reality within which we must operate. You can't beat 'em, so join 'em.
- 1/50 ● A second step was to use this opportunity to embrace the participatory desires of the client by inviting them into our creative process. Embracing the client as a necessary participant in the evolution of their project.
- 1/51 ● Collaborating with clients can be challenging when attempting to:
- communicate ideas
  - share documents
  - maintain a project's scope
  - define roles ('client as designer')
- 1/52 ● To address many of these challenges we've embraced the archive as modular framework for both documenting and visualizing our projects and our firm.

- 1/53 ● For us the archive can be seen as:
- an organizational tool to document by overcoming the tendencies of email communication and adjusting to shortened attention spans.
  - a collaborative tool by providing a clear means for clients to meaningfully participate while maintaining our own creative agency.
  - an archive by creating an accessible history of our work for both internal and external usage.
  - not having a start and finish, but rather an archive from which other projects can evolve, be referenced, accounted for and monitored.

1/54 ● The archive has allowed the visualization of process to stand-in for THE workplace (virtual workplace).

1/55 ○ What does the project archive look like?

1/56 ● You're looking at it (sort of).

1/57 ● We break down a project into a collection of nodes. Looking at every node as being relevant to the broader project.

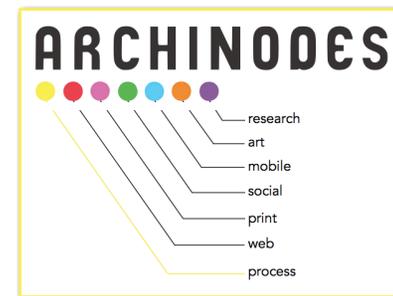
1/58 ● ..... ● Realizing that a project is not simply made up of those elements that end up in the "final product" but also those that contributed to its creation – whether technical, creative or even anecdotal – there is an inherent value in preserving and organizing all of a project's pieces.

1/59 ● Every node matters.

1/60 ● To further help organize this our system, we've employed a system of categorization based on the type (or aspects of work) we are engaging with.

1/61 ● In working with academics, we recognized the value in being able to visualize a project's elements in a variety of ways.

1/62 ● The external flexibility of using a project's archive as a report, a plan, pitch, or presentation.





1/71 ● We see the visualization of information as intrinsically tied to the organizational structure of our process.

1/71 ● Building upon elements which are natural, instinctual, unobtrusive, familiar and necessarily engaging.

## MOVING FORWARD

● This document is available at:  
<http://www.archinodes.com/node/158>

● Archinodes would like to thank Karl-Magnus Johansson as well as the Regional State Archives and School of Design and Crafts University of Gothenburg for the opportunity to present our ideas.

● We encourage readers of this document to embrace collaboration, reveal process and communicate through design.

● Archinodes is not on Facebook

● Sometimes we tweet @archinodes

● <http://goo.gl/aRb7Z>