

Greetings, day one

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Oct. 13, 2016 | Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA
Dodging the Memory Hole 2016: Saving online news

EDWARD MCCAIN: [00:07] Welcome to the fourth Dodging the Memory Hole event. It's part of our outreach effort from the Journalism Digital News Archive at the University of Missouri. It's great to have you here. We're going to focus, today, on saving online news. We've talked about "born digital" for a while, but I think the elephant in the room has been that a large amount of the content that is published today, which is online, is at risk of loss. So, we're trying to figure out what we're going to do about that. We've got some great speakers today. I'm going to try to keep the moderator role very short. And with that in mind, I'm going to introduce the UCLA university librarian, Ginny Steele, to give us some opening remarks. Ginny.

GINNY STEELE: [01:22] Thank you so much, Ed, and welcome everybody. As Ed said, I'm Ginny Steele, the UCLA university librarian, and I am really delighted to welcome everybody to Los Angeles, UCLA, and the UCLA Library. And — Hi Martin, I just have to say hello to someone who is back who used to be part of us. So, it's great that there's so much interest in this topic because we at UCLA are deeply concerned about the potential, and even real losses, already occurring around online news content.

STEELE: [02:03] As a cultural heritage institution, we are committed to the preservation of information so that it will be available not only for our current students, faculty researchers, and the general public, but also for future generations. We also realize, though, that news habits, if we can call them that, for many people, have changed and they are now relying on born-digital content, which does present a whole set of new challenges for libraries and archives.

STEELE: [02:36] And as I was thinking about this conference, I was reflecting on my career as a librarian. When I began, news was available in the traditional ways: newspapers, radio and television. And television was really the big three: ABC, CBS and NBC. And at that time, libraries were able to rely on getting microfilm copies of major newspapers and then, over the years, a number of institutions such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, provided funding to capture and preserve local and regional newspapers.

STEELE: [03:15] I have to say, though, a lot of that work is still going on because there are newspapers from particularly under-represented communities that were not gathered up. So, that's an ongoing project and that just shows, even in a print world, how challenging it is. But then, at that time, also, TV news was hard to come by. Although Vanderbilt started its news archive on August 5, 1968, and has been recording, preserving and providing access to TV news broadcasts since then. But with the latter part of the 20th century, came cable and satellite television and the multiplicity of new news stations.

STEELE: [04:00] But the biggest change was the internet, as we all know, which gave easy access to anyone with a network connection, to both traditional and new forms of news content. And then the advent of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media, changed the ways people looked for news and really ramped up the set of challenges that libraries, archives, and other heritage institutions face to gather, preserve, and make news content persistent and available.

STEELE: [04:34] So I was interested to read that, this year, when the Pew Research Center did its study of journalism in media, they found that 62 percent of U.S. adults get news on social media such as Reddit, which is the top one, Facebook and Twitter. In some cases, it's by accident: somebody goes online and is just looking for something else or checking to find out what their friends are up to on Facebook. But in other cases, increasingly, people are actually going to these social media sites to get their news.

STEELE: [05:14] So, figuring out how to preserve the born-digital news media is not going to be easy, as I think everybody in this room knows. There are legal, technical, social and economic issues, and these seem to get more complex every day. Just as one example, I would point out, in the last weeks, that we've seen how closely intertwined the entertainment industry has become with news. And, I have to say that I'm glad I'm not working at NBC dealing with these recordings, untelevised, of *The Apprentice* and struggling to figure out what should become of them. Should they be released, or not, and what are the legal issues, et cetera, et cetera.

STEELE: [06:03] So, we need to figure out a coordinated strategy to save born-digital news content as a record of our culture and society. This is an enormous task, much bigger than any one institution can take on. And, fortunately, multiple institutions are already working on this. The Library of Congress has some work under way. Of course, the Internet Archive, the Center for Research Libraries and a number of universities.

STEELE: [06:33] And that's where I think this conference, *Dodging the Memory Hole*, comes in. I hope that over the next two days, everyone here will help develop a framework for cooperation and collaboration around this important issue. As Abby Smith Rumsey said in her book, *"When We Are No More: How Digital Memory Is Shaping Our Future,"* "building resilient and ubiquitous digital memory systems will take time. It will require concerted investments of human and financial capital to model and test approaches. There will be near misses along the way, but failure can be very instructive. There will be social, political, economic and legal wrangling, as people and corporations scramble to secure rights and revenue streams before they even know which business models will support growth and which will crush it. We are still in the early days of the digital era. The best, if not the only, way to understand the powers and limitations of the technology is to use it. In the meantime, until the arrangements work themselves out, the opportunity for individuals to make a difference will be almost unlimited."

STEELE: [07:46] So, you have unlimited opportunity. I wish you the best of the next two days and look forward to hearing the outcomes from tomorrow afternoon. Enjoy.