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## Review: Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition

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***Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition.*** Edited by Andrew Hoskins (New York: Routledge, 2018. 313 pp.)

William Faulkner famously wrote that “the past is never dead. It's not even past.” This has never been more true than in today’s world when digital reminders of our experiences live among us through social media posts, smartphones, and online archives. Society’s increasingly intimate coexistence with our own history is both a blessing and a curse. We are simultaneously afforded the convenience of instantly accessing memories and denied the solace of forgetting the imperfections of the past.

Scholars endeavor in this environment to examine our accelerating reliance on digital representations of the past and how it affects our behavior in the present and our outlook on the future. In *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, editor Andrew Hoskins compiles a series of essays that serve as an “agenda for mapping these transformations, their consequences, and of potential ways forward. . . .” The book tackles the subject matter through an assemblage of viewpoints from experts in the studies of memory, media, film, history, culture, communications, and archives that results in a multifaceted and diverse evaluation of our relationship with the past through digital media.

While the book is not necessarily intended for the casual reader and many of the scholarly essays assume some familiarity with the concepts, theories, technologies, and literature associated with digital memory, the publication is full of illuminating and entertaining subjects related to the burgeoning field of study. The wide-ranging collection of subjects challenges the reader to consider how humanity’s convoluted digital connection with the past affects our societal growth and examines this ever-changing relationship through the themes of connectivity, archaeology, economy, and archives.

Some of the fascinating topics explored in the book include Amanda Lagerkvist’s study of digital immortality in “The media end: digital afterlife agencies and techno-existential culture.” The author employs thought-provoking examples from both science fiction and current events to scrutinize the various methods that may theoretically be used to perpetuate or terminate one’s digital existence. In Wulf Kansteiner’s chapter “The Holocaust in the 21st century,” he examines the apprehension linked to digital depictions of the Holocaust through gaming, selfies, and mobile apps, while Timothy Barker describes television’s continued role in perpetuating memory in his essay titled “Television in and out of time.” The book also includes discussions of the inequities and environmental impacts of memory infrastructure, a “culture of the past” that impedes societal growth, an examination of the theories associated with storage technologies, and the idea of the multitude as the “defining digital organizational form of memory,” among other topics.

The final two essays organized under the “Archive” section of the book will particularly interest the archival community. These late entries examine not just the effects of the digital world on archives but also help to contextualize archival institutions in the larger digital memory landscape. In the section’s first essay, titled “Memory institutions, the archive and digital disruption?”, Michael Moss addresses the circumstances faced by cultural heritage institutions in their work to appraise, review, preserve, fund, and provide access to born-digital collections. It is

a subject familiar to most archivists and Moss provides a skillful summation of the challenges associated with preserving digital materials for public consumption.

In the book's final essay, "Tensions in the interface: The archive and the digital," Debra Ramsay advocates for the significance of an archive's digital interface as evidenced by the case study of a website redesign at the National Archives in the UK. She argues that in today's digital world there is urgency behind the idea that an interface is "the source of profound change in the way we access and think about information." One of the major challenges of designing such an interface, she contends, lies in overcoming unrealistic user expectations established by commercial websites.

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