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### Introduction

*The Contexts of Documentation*

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# Introduction

*Annet Dekker and Gabriella Giannachi*

## **The contexts of documentation**

Over the past three decades documentation has become a debated historical and cultural field of inquiry in information science as well as within the practices of performance, art, and, more recently, computer science. Interestingly, these disciplines approached documentation not only with different agendas but also through different methods. Performance studies focused almost entirely on the debate about the relationship between performance and documentation. While on the one hand, Peggy Phelan suggested that performance ‘cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation’,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, Philip Auslander, in discussing Yves Klein’s use of photomontage in *Leap into the Void* (1960), noted that performance does not always originate in a live act and could find its point of origin in a documentation.<sup>2</sup> Both points of view focus on the ontology of the relation between performance and documentation and whether they are mutually exclusive or implicate each other. Art historians and museum conservators and curators acknowledge that past performances tend to be experienced purely through documentation.<sup>3</sup> This prompted curators to start to use documentation, which had previously entered museums as part of the acquisition process and conservation, for exhibition and presentation purposes.<sup>4</sup> Hence documentation started to be considered not only as past facing, a record or remnants of an event, but also as future facing, in that museums started to use documentation to activate works in their collection.

Over time, museums developed increasingly complex uses of documentation to track how works behaved and changed within the museum and captured different iterations of a work, effectively also keeping track of how these iterations related to each other. This use of documentation illustrates the evolution of museum practices in relation to the exhibition and preservation of performance arts, time-based media and digital arts. As a growing number of interactive and participatory works started to enter museums, attention began to shift towards the role of the audience not only in documentation but also as documenters. Studies started to appear that were dedicated to spectatorship, temporality, and collective memory,<sup>5</sup> traced the evolving history of documentation through interviews with curators, conservators, scholars, and artists,<sup>6</sup> reconsidered the value of documentation in different

contexts,<sup>7</sup> and suggested new frameworks for thinking about the relationship between performance and documentation and documentation and the archive.<sup>8</sup> As digital art also started to become collectable, museums further expanded their documentation strategies which proved to be an increasingly essential part of the processes of production, circulation, and preservation of these forms. Finally, computer scientists, often invested in the production of digital artefacts, who in the past tended to adopt ethnomethodological approaches,<sup>9</sup> now also started to use documentation as a way to define the identity of digital works within both the physical world and the Internet of Things, rendering documentation a pivotal practice in any future ‘meta’ world.

*Documentation as Art* analyses how researchers and practitioners engaging with digital art and heritage have built on these debates and practices. Focusing on digital art, one of the most precarious, ephemeral, and yet also innovative and popular art forms, the essays in this volume discuss how these new ways to create and use documentation have been adapted for the conservation, curation, and study of artworks which are otherwise likely to become obsolete. Considering documentation as the main solution to preserving but also exhibiting and circulating knowledge about these art forms, the authors underline the significance of an expanded understanding of documentation for conservators and curators, academics, artists, and audience members. More specifically, they analyse how documentation can address the challenges inherent to capturing live events, visitor experiences, and disappearing or destroyed artworks, and value the meaning and function of documentation as the only remaining dimension of digital art.

### **The changing values of documentation**

One of the most influential texts on documentation was written by the French librarian Suzanne Briet whose 1951 ‘Qu’est-ce que la documentation?’ (‘What is Documentation?’) still constitutes a milestone in the understanding of documentation as a form of production within the cultural sector. While she claimed that ‘the forms that the documentary work assumes are as numerous as the needs from which they are born’,<sup>10</sup> in practice, these forms were strictly divided and followed specific methods and standardisation processes. Expanding on earlier notions of describing the value of documentation and documents, and under the influence of semiotic analysis, Briet proposed that a document is a ‘concrete or symbolic indexical sign [*indice*], preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon’.<sup>11</sup> To her, such documents could be written letters, books, stones, or her famous example, an antelope. However, she also suggested making a distinction between primary, secondary, and auxiliary documents. The first is the initial document, and the second provides information about the initial document. As Briet explained, ‘Is a star a document? Is a pebble rolled by a torrent a document? Is a living animal a document? No. But the photographs and the catalogs of stars, the stones in a museum of mineralogy, and the animals that are catalogued and shown in a zoo, are the documents’.<sup>12</sup> The third type derives from the assumption that documents

are always part of and reflective of the context or network in which they appear.<sup>13</sup> As such, according to Briet, this ‘can in certain cases end in a genuine *creation*, through the juxtaposition, selection, and the comparison of documents, and the production of auxiliary documents’ (emphasis in original).<sup>14</sup> Even though Briet didn’t make a hierarchical distinction *per se*, by using the typology and relating it to consecutive working methods, it’s nevertheless implied that the primary document is the first ‘neutral’ thing and the secondary and auxiliary are derivatives that are created to fit specific systems of standardisation.

However, the distinction between primary, secondary, and even auxiliary documents is challenged when looking at the way documentation (as the secondary, or even auxiliary, document) functions within artists’ practices (as primary documents). As proposed by Annet Dekker, Gabriella Giannachi, and Vivian van Saaze in their article ‘Expanding Documentation’,<sup>15</sup> secondary and even auxiliary (or tertiary) documents can become part of or replace primary documents, because they are integrated into a new version of the work, replace a lost work, or may become artworks in themselves. Rather than speaking about documents and thus documentation in a hierarchical sense, Dekker, Giannachi and van Saaze consider such documentation as inter-documents, that is environments that comprise primary, secondary, and auxiliary documents.<sup>16</sup> By seeing documentation as interrelated, the primary, secondary, and auxiliary documents move beyond mere representation and, at certain moments, cannot only represent but also become the artwork. While different documents within an artwork can be distinguished, this shifts the understanding of documentation as a single component, a single moment, or a set of instructions or guidelines to a conceptual method from which new interpretations and indeed new works can be made, providing novel ways to understand the meaning and value of documentation.<sup>17</sup> While this implies that documentation becomes performative when (re)used, circulated, or versioned, despite its perceived static nature, it could be argued that Briet’s library classification falls short in an aesthetic and museological sense,<sup>18</sup> her emphasis on the ‘genuine *creation*’ that can take place in the *practice* of the documentalist as well as how documentation *generates* meaning and value through ‘the juxtaposition, selection, and the comparison of documents, and the production of auxiliary documents’,<sup>19</sup> shows that documentation can also be performative.

This notion of performativity is explained by computer scientist David Levy, who argues that documents (either analogue or digital) are always both ‘fluid’ and ‘fixed’.<sup>20</sup> For instance, paper notes, receipts, and even photocopies can also be characterised as fluid. Although fixed at a certain time and for a certain period, oftentimes annotations are made on existing documents, so it changes once distributed.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Levy stresses that the meaning and value of the properties of a document are context dependent. Thus, a document is defined as an artefact (a focus on documents as physical and social constructs) in relation to a technology, by which documents are created, manipulated, and distributed.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, documentation is part of doing work, which means that documents are evolving artefacts and should be understood in terms of their use and performance.<sup>23</sup>

One of the effects of using ‘doing documentation’ in this volume is that it allows us to emphasise the different and, we would argue, complementary orientations towards documentation. Cultural heritage institutions, artists, and audience members all create documentation, although for different reasons. On the one hand, the orientation of the artists is most closely connected to the perspective of the committed observer: they observe and reflect on the art project as it develops. On the other hand, as soon as the project is first presented and starts to unfold (or even when it is merely presented), audience members (or other artists) can become co-documenters when capturing the(ir) experience of the art project – and in some cases co-creators of it. There is, however, an important difference in orientation. Whereas artist-generated documentation can be characterised by its theoretical orientation (through making and testing, as well as seeing data as documentation), audience-generated documentation is usually regarded as being closer to an ‘aesthetic orientation’.<sup>24</sup> As explained by Chiel Kattenbelt, following Seel, the aesthetic orientation ‘concerns an emotionally intensified, affective perception and a reflexive orientation towards one’s own subjectivity’.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, documentation for most audience members primarily signals an interest in perceiving and presenting experience qualities: they present, by means of technology, their (visual) experiences to others. Moreover, in the era of Instagrammability and image-creation, the circulatory capital that is set in motion by technical platforms emphasises how documentation is both a reflection on the art project and also invites reflection on the personal identity (or brand) of the person doing the documentation. Here, doing documentation is further complicated and influenced by an additional intention: the mechanisms of the technology driving the platforms. Although coming from different orientations, doing documentation is then as much to be understood as research producing a specific kind of knowledge that is not only directly related to the art project (by the artists) but also indirectly to the continuing ‘life’ of the art project as documentation (by the audience and the technologies they use and are imbricated in), which furthermore points to the potential sociopolitical and technical relevance of doing documentation. Finally, the institutional intention would be to synthesise these different iterations and create (meta-)documentation which will serve to ensure a sustainable future for the art project. However, in most institutional practices, the observer perspective prevails, in which artists’ documentation is important but is transformed into standardised metadata and inserted into record management systems. Assessing the various intentions of doing documentation more holistically gives way to a more reflexive understanding of the potential of the sociopolitical and technical relations between the art project and its documentary agents and how the various orientations towards documentation contribute to art (historical) praxis. Taken together, Levy already stressed the importance of seeing documents in relation to their socio-technical use. Their function can therefore acquire different properties and values according to the context they are used, placed in, and interpreted. In other words, it is in their function, or performativity, that documentation becomes meaningful and can be validated or valued. And, again, it is through its performativity, through (the work that) doing documentation generates, that documentation can become art.

## Documentation as Art

In exploring contemporary methods of documentation, this book specifically focuses on a number of shifts in photographic technologies that have been central to the practice of art history, showing how from the Google Art Project to Instagram, the camera is now not only a networked but also dispersed computational device, which continues to mediate our experience of art, particularly online, through social media. Reflecting on the values of documentation, including ‘unauthorised documentation’, and expanding on the idea of audience documentation, the contributions explore the potentiality, as well as challenges, that an upsurge and a dispersion of documentation cause to the cultural sector. In addition to showing how documentation itself can become (part of) an original artwork, they also analyse how these expanded practices of documentation can impact the value and experience of the documented event or artwork and examine how this might in turn affect the traditional authority of the museum as a creator of documentation used for future reference, historical relevance, or cultural memory. In doing so, *Documentation as Art* emphasises how museums may identify and develop new ways of maintaining curatorial authority over representing cultural value while empowering audiences to produce new content and value. The latter, we show, could be crucial for museums if their aim is to continue to preserve and exhibit digital artworks in the years to come.

The documentation discussed in this publication was primarily done by artists, researchers, curators, conservators, and museum visitors. While there is a growing body of research about oral history and oral culture analysing the values of documenting audience experiences and behaviours,<sup>26</sup> few systematic attempts have been made to explore the benefits of documenting and exhibiting audience experiences within the museum context. Moreover, despite its complex role in mediating scientific, social, and cultural life, photography often functioned historically as an uncomplicated and transparent medium for the reproduction of artworks. Rarely were the contexts of these uses of photography in documentation recorded as part of the documentation. We recognise the need to treat the camera, and related optical technologies, as an apparatus that is fundamental to the transformation and translation of cultural value.<sup>27</sup> This shift is particularly relevant in two specific areas of art documentation: first, the hyper-visibility of images created by high-end cameras such as Google Camera, which allow detailed and interactive encounters with art objects and museums interiors,<sup>28</sup> and second, embedded in mobile phones, the camera has become an ideal ‘snap-tool’ to quickly capture a moment. As a consequence, audience snapshots exceed by far the production of documentation by authorised professionals.<sup>29</sup> Both have impacted the art experience and, to an extent, have changed the authority of the museum as well. This shift most profoundly influences the way art can now be experienced and preserved, moving from the museum online – often commercial – software platforms.<sup>30</sup> It is also largely thanks to this shift that documentation is not only increasingly signifying art, becoming art, but also that the doing of it ought to be considered an art in itself.

The use of documentation within the museum context has been changing radically over the last 20 years and is no longer merely focused on the past life of a work or event but also on the anticipation of what is needed to ensure its future activations. In this sense, documentation has become more future oriented and is now often the connecting tissue between different iterations of a work, mapping the ways in which the cultural organisations that have acquired them make sense of how they change over time and how the audiences' engagement with them may change accordingly. In this sense, documentation maps the adaptive behaviour of a museum in relation to its collection, forming a record not only of its collection but also of its attitude towards it. These different uses of documentation started to reveal new ways of thinking about documentation. Thus, documentation is no longer merely seen as a function or derivative of art, but rather as a practice capable of changing the status of an 'original' artwork in a collection. In this sense documentation not only future-proofs but also relentlessly (re-)invents and so (re-)becomes the artwork. Hence, the relationship between documentation and art is much more porous than originally anticipated.

*Documentation as Art* analyses how documentation has become an essential practice not only for museum conservators and curators but also, increasingly, for visitors. The authors demonstrate how documentation created by visitors has started to play an increasingly important role for museums and galleries. To reflect the varied contexts of the production and use of documentation, this volume brought together sector experts from museums, digital arts organisations, researchers, curators, and artists, from a range of practices and disciplines, including digital art, photography, performance, curation, media, computer science, and games. It aims to trace the history of digital art documentation and its curation through documentation, while also showing how the curation and preservation of documentation and, especially, the introduction of audience-generated documentation in the museum and third-party owned platforms, have started to have a greater influence on exhibition and visiting practices, becoming an increasingly significant and impactful artistic form in its own right.

Indeed, snapping images to illustrate everyday experiences and uploading them online to share them with friends have become effortlessly simple and ubiquitous. Doing documenting happens everywhere, at any time, and of everything. So, in addition to it occurring as part of archival, organisational, informational apparatuses, documentation has become a pervasive part of ordinary lives. *Documentation as Art* analyses this expansion of documentation, suggesting that the practice of documentation has been radically changing the ways in which many people look at, participate in, and remember art, heritage, and their encounters with them. Providing an in-depth investigation of the development of documentation as art, the different authors validate the value of documentation as a set of production, circulation, and preservation strategies carried out by artists, audiences, and museum curators and conservators, both within museum and exhibition contexts and beyond. By presenting documentation as art, we suggest not only that documentation can take the place of an artwork or it can be used to activate or

reinterpret an artwork but also that documentation can be considered as an art form, and indeed many artists have used documentation in this way.

*Documentation as Art* explores the practices and impacts of documentation through different interconnected perspectives. The first section, **Production**, focuses on and analyses how artists' documentation can become (part of) a new artwork or represent a new version of an artwork, changing the status of the 'original' artwork that was once collected. The second section, **Circulation**, examines how documentation is created, distributed, valued, and collected by audiences and how this new type of documentation broadens the field of documentation as an aesthetic form and curatorial strategy that is often propelled by circulation and online platforms. The last section, **Preservation**, illustrates how museums and other organisations create and collect documentation for preservation and exhibition purposes and how their practices have changed due to their efforts to preserve unstable or ephemeral artworks for the future, resulting in the creation of works that are capable of self-documentation. Brought together, these perspectives and resulting practices evidence the existence of a burgeoning documentation 'industry' which not only forms a part of existing archival and exhibition apparatuses but also exists beyond them, so that tangible and intangible entities can secure a presence and permanence within the Internet of Things. These increasingly hybrid forms of art-documentation, that are both art *and* documentation, connect different iterations of works, their networks of care, and the sites that have acquired and exhibited them. In this sense, documentation entails a complex epistemic dimension that is also its aesthetic dimension. Hence documentation is not only a record about art, it is a form of art.

## Part 1. Production

The chapters in this section look specifically into how expanded documentation practices influence the value and experience of the 'original' artwork and how they affect the authority of the museum as the creator of documentation used for future reference, historical relevance, or cultural memory. Annet Dekker discusses how for many artists documentation has become a solution to capture digital projects to ensure their relevance in art-historical discourses. By analysing the different ways artists have been creating and using documentation, she demonstrates how documentation can become a new artwork, thereby encouraging a rethinking about what documentation means. Such rethinking signals a shift from documentation as a single interpretation (for instance, in historical performance photography and video art practices), or a set of instructions or guidelines (as happened in, among others, several conceptual artworks), to a conceptual method from which new artworks and interpretations can be made, which can provide additional ways to understand the value of documentation. One of the outcomes is how such documentation moves beyond the conventional (often static) documentation methods in preservation practices to prioritise the more dynamic and performative methods.



Katrina Sluis expands on this analysis by asking what is captured in the act of photographic documentation. Focusing on the medium of photography and how it has become networked and tied to computational infrastructure, she explores how art's mediation and documentation has become more complicated. Analysing projects by artists Cristina Garrido, and Eva & Franco Mattes, she explores how the historic relation between the art object and its documentation is now eclipsed by the relations between the artwork's documentation and its audience. She demonstrates how artists 'complicate, intervene, or reflexively exploit these emerging circuits of reproduction, circulation, and reification', thus addressing the tension between the cultural value of the art object and its documentation. This highlights how engaging with the documentation of art not only exceeds the attention for the original, but also it is not the 'museum which secures immortality or iconicity of the artwork, but rather the audience, who conspires in its networked proliferation'. In this process, the boundary between the value of the artwork and that of its documentation becomes increasingly blurred.

By describing a collaborative project by Julia Weist and Nestor Siré around the Cuban 'El Paquete', a large network of in-person file sharing, Orit Gat illustrates how different documentation-related functions (from capturing to distribution and providing access) form a continuum. She proposes that by re-appropriating material that was only available as documentation, through the artists' intervention the documentation folds into art projects, which has the potential of valuing it as art rather than as a derivative. Moreover, Weist and Siré's project provides a (documentation) model to bypass standards, and state and corporate efforts to regulate and dominate by creating an informal community that is based on sharing, as well as an invitation to engage, create, and add more documentation. Sharing documentation also has a long tradition in gaming cultures.

Rather than distributing other people's content, the phenomenon of in-game photography, a term that emerged around 2010 to describe the practice of screenshotting game worlds, is a way to document the gameplay. Besides its aesthetic dimensions, which are largely derived from analogue photography, as Marco De Mutiis explains, in-game photography reveals social and political contexts of the larger media ecology around gaming culture, which is a meaningful aspect of the games. At the moment, documentation of this leads a precarious life as it is primarily distributed through different social media or game platforms, and without the interference of institutional security, it may easily subside into oblivion.

The UK-based, internationally renowned performance group Blast Theory has established a profound and in many ways ground-breaking documentation practice in which they explore different aspects and understandings of the ways their projects function in and through documentation.<sup>31</sup> With their documentation efforts, they want to communicate their artistic vision, as well as ensure the possibility to reconstruct a project. Yet, as explained by one of its founders, Matt Adams, recently they experienced a big shift in doing documentation from which to view their projects has become increasingly divergent: moving between the active player(s), their surroundings, which are often part of the 'game', the wider context of the project, to the data that is generated. Unpacking the different layers

of documentation and their ethical challenges, from surveillance to privacy and proprietary problems, illustrates how the different forms and phases of documentation start to overlap, thus complicating as well as collapsing the role and value of documentation as a mode of production, presentation, and preservation. This ‘nesting’ of documentation accentuates the importance of audience members as active documenters in the process of doing documentation.

## Part 2. Circulation

The second section considers an expanded practice of documentation: how documentation is created, received, disseminated, valued, and collected through its circulation. By comparing a wide range of contexts, the contributors to this section furthermore show how audience-generated documentation can play a fundamental role, first by disseminating knowledge about heritage, as is shown by Sandra Fauconnier in her comparative analysis of how digital heritage has been published and circulated online in a diverse and ever-evolving digital infrastructure. Artists, audiences, institutions, and other stakeholders are creating, maintaining, and using a range of platforms to disseminate and interrelate knowledge about art and culture, encompassing digitised heritage (i.e., ‘digital surrogates’ and other representations of analogue cultural works), digital creative works, and a wide variety of contextualising materials. Here, Fauconnier assesses the status, role, and impact of this infrastructure, distinguishing between and analysing different categories of online platforms for digital heritage in the field of digital art.

Examining a specific case, Ofri Cnaani traces the politics of digital memory through three kinds of documentation modes: user-generated, corporate, and artistic, to show how the boundaries between them are disintegrating and being redefined. Using the example of the aftermath of a fatal fire in 2018 that destroyed two centuries’ worth of treasures in Brazil’s national museum, Cnaani describes how digital collections were created from audience documentation via WikiCommons and a Google virtual tour of the now non-existent museum’s possessions. As she mentions, ‘vertical institutional hierarchies and a horizontal network became [entangled] in a new political mesh’. This new situation shows how audience members, commercial companies, and artists’ reflections become valuable partners in preserving knowledge about art and culture, especially where the heritage is under threat or no longer exists.

In a similar way, Nour A. Munawar analyses the different attempts to document Syria’s cultural heritage by focusing on users of social media platforms, academics, and (inter)national heritage institutions. Showing how the different stakeholders each contribute in their own specific way to the preservation and promotion of documentary heritage in digital forms, yet recognising the pitfalls of the singular efforts, he proposes that combining them will enable a more comprehensive history-writing process. Such a combined approach may ultimately establish added value for reconstruction plans in post-conflict contexts.

In their conversation, Gaia Tedone and Dena Yago zoom in on the influence of social media on the documentation of exhibitions more generally. Here artworks

are often used by the general public as a backdrop for selfies, which consequently are used by institutions to attract new audiences. Yago argues that art documentation as it circulates through networked technologies becomes a unit of social capital, which creates added value for the cultural institutions and social media platforms. As users increasingly become a function of the social media apparatus, art institutions turn into content publishers and are complicit in soliciting a detached, step-and-repeat spectatorialism. As Tedone and Yago conclude, art documentation becomes an increasingly networked practice that is inscribed within a complex ecology of socio-technical practices and economic platforms in which the user, and hence the documentation practice, is entangled and influenced by algorithms.

Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied also explore social media platforms in their project *One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age*. The project automates the distribution of screenshots of GeoCities' user homepages to raise awareness and generate an appreciation of early web culture when amateurs still designed their own online world. By re-animating the 'unprofessional production' of ordinary web users, the example seeks to critique a model of cultural value that cannot account for a web vernacular either as heritage or as a form of knowledge. Instead, by reflecting on the technical and cultural infrastructure of the project and its audiences, Lialina, in conversation with Annet Dekker and Katrina Sluis, offers insights into the cultural value of documentation by analysing how documentation as a method for conservation is about practices rather than objects.

The chapters in this section explore and analyse new types of documentation that result from these practices, illustrating how they broaden the field of documentation, both as an aesthetic form and as a distribution strategy that encourages people to upload and share information about themselves and their heritage. These developments make for a more diverse approach to what documentation means and question the conventional modes of exhibition and preservation, illustrating how documentation can produce engagement with heritage that no longer exists physically but also generate other kinds of value through our ever-growing craving for self-representation, and so self-documentation, at all times and in all contexts. As such, these forms of audience-generated documentation challenge the authority of museums and other cultural organisations by sharing views and experiences of artworks and heritage, both tangible and intangible, with a wider audience, in the process discarding traditional aesthetics, forms, and hierarchies and providing new perspectives on how art may be received in the future.

### **Part 3. Preservation**

The final section of this volume outlines recent developments in the field of digital art documentation, examines aspects of the history of documentation, and illustrates how museums and other established institutions collect and create documentation using digital means. Gabriella Giannachi traces three major shifts in the ways digital artworks are documented within the museum context. These have played a key role in expanding who should be consulted when documenting a

work; started to track how works change over time; and have been capturing how audiences interact with the works, altering our understanding of the relationship between art and documentation, and museums and their audiences. Analysing the use of documentation for preservation and exhibition, her contribution shows that documentation is both past and future facing and is an increasingly essential mechanism for the conservation of historical artworks and the production of alternative iterations of artworks, as well as for the creation of new artworks.

Yuh sien Chen and Tzuchuan Lin explore the use of virtual reality (VR) in documenting digital art, while questioning how an art institution could use this method of re-interpretation. Whereas several institutions are using VR to document the exhibitions in their gallery spaces or the artworks in their collections, little information is available about documenting digital art in VR. Through their experiment, Chen and Lin propose that VR can be useful to recreate interactive, spatial, and performative elements of an artwork. Moreover, they show that such an effort is feasible even in situations without documentation of the initial installation. By conducting in-depth interviews with the artist and technicians and relying on audience memory, they were able to curate a new VR version, thereby sketching the future possibilities of immersive technologies in the field of digital art preservation and documentation.

Anni Wallenius addresses the challenge of the ecosystem of social media services for heritage organisations working with photographic collections. By presenting an example of best-practice that has emerged from the Nordic project *Collecting Social Photo*, she explores how museums and archives can develop sustainable ways to document photographic practices by and through social media. She offers insight into how roles, motivations, and methods in documentation should change to better accommodate the networked, fluid, ephemeral, and communicative nature of the social digital photograph.

The preservation of the networked and performative character of digital art is the goal of Rhizome. While explaining how some digital art cannot be acquired, maintained, or owned, Dragan Espenschied emphasises how documentation can fill in the gaps between different manifestations of a piece. Teasing out the distinction between the live web and web archives reveals how performing artefacts are replaced by static documentation, thereby turning the artwork into ‘a hybrid of itself and its documentation’. Espenschied explores how specific types of documentation can become part of an artwork’s manifestation, furthermore illustrating how the notions of dynamic performance and static documentation collapse and open up to the performativity of documentation.

By tracing the history of the creation of the ‘Carolan guitar’ and analysing its place within the growing field of ‘smart objects’, Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi show how an artwork can also self-document its ‘identity’. The Carolan guitar is connected to a blog that documents different aspects of its life, which can be linked to various web sources. Mirroring the use of memory objects in oral history research, the guitar gathers the stories, which become embedded and are used in performances, which in turn are archived to be potentially re-used again. Using the guitar as a technology probe, they assess the role of documentation in

defining the identity of ‘things’, redefining objects as fields or networks for which documentation is paramount to the affirmation of their presence within the Internet of Things. Explaining that documentation is about the question of what is the *art* (or ‘core’ and/or identity) in the artwork, they argue that documentation is the apparatus that is put in place to frame the work that is involved in preserving the art in the artwork, hence suggesting that documentation is an art form in its own right.

This section illustrates how documentation collected by museums is both past and future facing, and plays a key role in preserving the memory of past works while also contributing key knowledge for their re-activations over time. Not only is documentation used to capture artistic practices occurring through a range of media, including social media, but it is also increasingly used to connect different manifestations of a work with each other and with different departments in a museum, linking production and circulation with preservation. It offers case studies that are focused on state-of-the-art practices using special online documentation tools, social media, and VR. At the same time, the section moves beyond museum preservation practice to signal ‘self-documentation’ of digital art that cares for its own identity and that of its players and keepers, so that they can maintain their presence within the Internet of Things, thus indicating that documentation not only preserves art but, in doing so, documentation becomes art.

## Notes

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- 2 Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 28, no. 3 (2006): 1–10, 5.
- 3 Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” *Art Journal*, no. 4 (1997): 11–8.
- 4 Toni Sant, ed., *Performing Documentation. The Context & Processes of Digital Curation and Archiving* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).
- 5 Mechthild Widrich, *Performative Monuments* (Manchester: MUP, 2014).
- 6 Gabriella Giannachi and Jonah Westerman, *Histories of Performance Documentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 7 Richard Reinhart and Jon Ippolito, *Re-Collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014); Beryl Graham, ed., *New Collecting: Exhibiting and Audiences After New Media Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).
- 8 Gabriella Giannachi, *Archive Everything* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2016).
- 9 Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967) and Andy Crabtree, Mike Rouncefield, and Peter Tolmie, *Doing Design Ethnography* (London: Springer Verlag, 2012).
- 10 Suzanne Briet, *What Is Documentation?*, trans. Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet with Hermina Angheliescu (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006 [1951]), 36.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 12 *Ibid.*
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- 18 Dekker et al., 77.
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