

**Archiving As
Artistic Practice
OR
Your Project
Isn't Done Yet!**

MFA Brown Art 2019

What do you remember from the work you were making five years ago? What do you want to tell your future self about the work you're making today? In the face of the alienating and exclusive structures of PWI institutional archives and the surveillance and precarity of the "archives" on the commercial platforms where many of us document our lives, what methods are available to us to collect and preserve personal and community histories? This includes resources related to self-preservation and archiving as a form of care, centering the needs of artists of color.

What records do you create, and what records are created about you? (circle/add more)



1. Find your stuff.

Locate your paper, analog, and digital records:

- old photos on facebook
- video on SD cards
- family VHS tapes in your closet
- essays on a learning management platform
- tax records in your email attachments
- text messages on your phone/icloud
- contracts in a filing cabinet
- tickets in your planner
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Start small: you don't have to build your entire archive in a day.



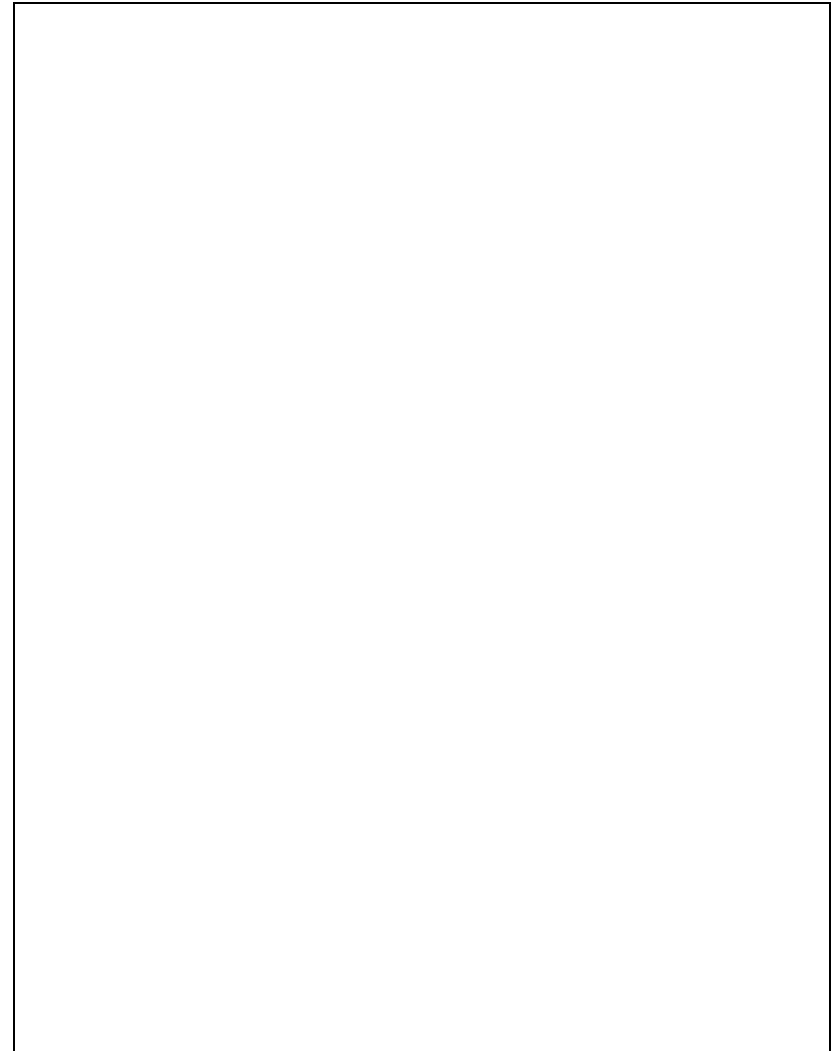
2. Select what you want to keep.

What do you want to keep? What do you need to preserve? What are some reasons you might want to keep your records?

If you have multiple versions of projects, and it's not important to record the process or development of the project, choose the version that is the best quality file/most final version.

You can be as narrow or as wide as you want in your decision making process -- it's **your** personal archive.

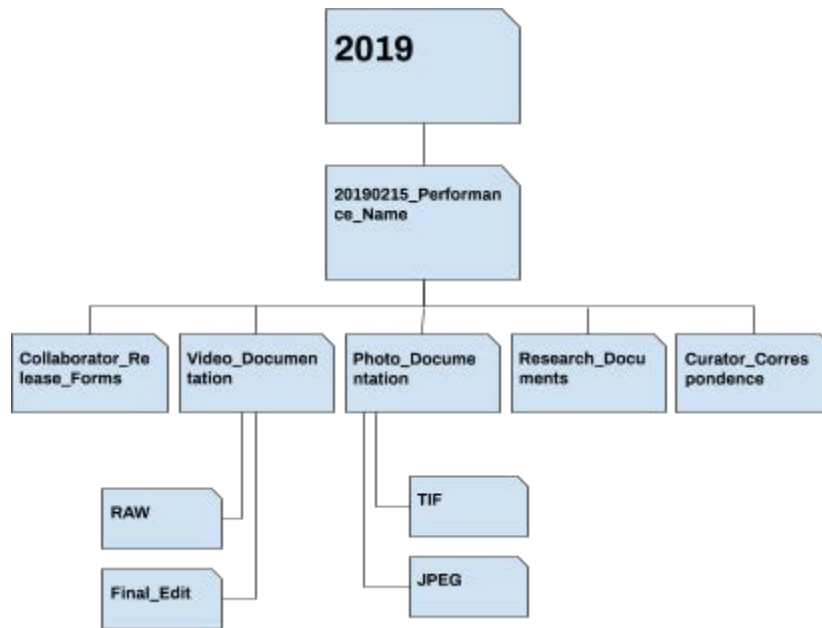
What is important to you? What do you want to preserve and why?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their responses to the question above.

3. Organize and describe.

Aim for logical, consistent organization and file or folder naming.

A good rule to follow is to name and arrange your stuff in a way that could help someone else figure out what's going on.



An example of organizational structure for performance documentation

You might not need further description for your materials, but if it's useful, think about what characteristics you want to describe about your different materials.

For example, for a painting, you might describe it using **a title, dimensions, medium, and year**. For keeping track of your painting or talking about it with curators or collectors, you might want to include a description of **exhibition history, current owner, price, a thumbnail image or link to an image, and notes** related to the body of work it emerged from, research you did to complete it, or anything else you think is relevant.

Your needs for description will change based on what you are describing, but it's a generally good idea to keep description standard and structured, so that you can use it to sort, search, and provide access. Here's an example of an artwork inventory using some of those fields:

<http://tiny.cc/artinventory>

4. Maintain.

Preserving digital files:

- ★ try to use non-proprietary, lossless formats
- ★ keep at least two, ideally more copies, in geographically different locations (a hard drive, the cloud, your computer)

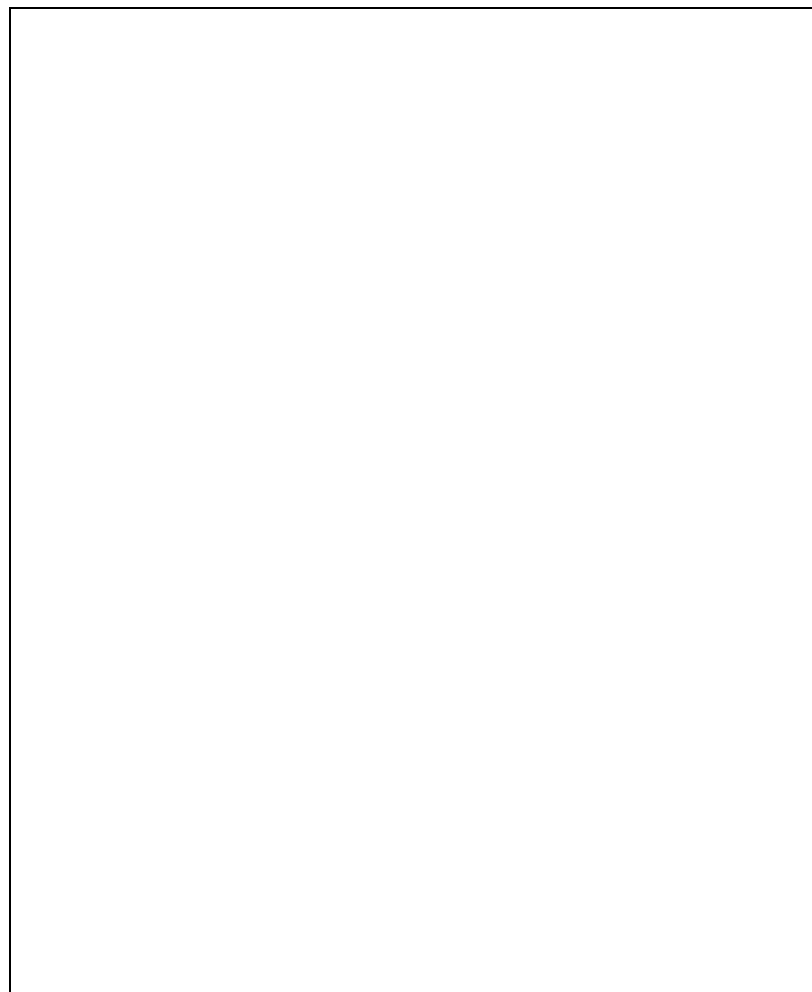
For preserving paper/analog materials:

- ★ use acid-free storage if possible (Gaylord Archival sometimes has big sales)
- ★ try to keep temperatures and humidity low (under 70°, between 30-50% relative humidity) and consistent

Got VHS tapes, CDs, rando thumb drives, DV tapes, cassettes? Transfer/digitize your A/V and digital materials off obsolete carriers to preserve them! (See the resources section for more.)

Come back to your stuff once a year, whether digital or physical, to check on it. Delete/trash stuff you don't want, rescue more things from defunct social media platforms, update your file formats and descriptions.

What's your preservation plan? Start with achievable steps with deadlines, e.g. "this year I'll get consent from the members of the meme group I manage on facebook to archive the page"



Tools and Resources

Getting your data out of commercial platforms

Generally you can just search for the platform + export/download. Here are the current names of the download tools, but they may change (see the digital version of this zine for links!)

- Facebook [Download Your Information Tool](#)
- [Google Takeout](#)
- [Instagram Data Download](#)
- [Download iCloud Data](#)
- [Download your Twitter archive](#)
- [Export your Tumblr](#)
- [Squarespace export](#)

Web archiving + visualization tools

- [Webrecorder](#) (webrecorder.io) and [Webrecorder Player](#) (are great for archiving social media and dynamic websites from other accounts--not necessarily your data)
- Save page now on the [Internet Archive](#) (<https://archive.org/web/>)
- ePADD is a fun tool for visualizing your email (<https://library.stanford.edu/projects/epadd>)

XFR Collective (<https://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/>) is a non-profit organization that partners with artists, activists, individuals, and groups to lower the barriers to preserving at-risk audiovisual media – by providing low-cost digitization services and fostering a community of support for archiving and access through education, research, and cultural engagement.

BPL's Central Branch Info Commons

(<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/locations/central/dept/infocommons/tech-resources>) has free resources for cardholders, including scanning and A/V digitization infrastructure

METRO (<https://metro.org/services/599studio>) in Hell's Kitchen has DIY paper and A/V digitization stations as well as a born-digital media transfer station that can be used for \$30 or less per hour

<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/> (old but good resources)

Are you preserving your organization's records? Apply for a **Mellon grant for community archives** (<https://mellon.org/programs/scholarly-communications/call-for-proposals-community-based-archives/>)

Liberatory Archives Bibliography

Some articles, books, and sites that inspire us! Much of this bibliography was built from [The Legacy Project - Archives for Black Lives Bibliography](#) (Celeste Â-Re, Zakiya Collier, Holly Smith).

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Zine by Martha Tenney (martha.s.tenney@gmail.com) and Zakiya Collier (zakiya.collier@gmail.com). Feel free to copy and distribute freely.

Inspiration for this zine

Mary Kidd's "How to Start Archiving Your Podcast Files" zine
<https://kiddarchivist.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/podcast-archiving-zine.pdf>

And Jamie Mears' "Maximum ^{Preservation} ~~Preservation~~ 2: Electric Boogaloo" zine
<https://jaimemears.wordpress.com/tag/fanzine/>

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