RE_ACTION:

THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE EXPERIENCE

RE-CREATING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ARCHIVE AND THE

MUSEUM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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EXPERIENCE

RENEGOTIATING THE COMPETENCES OF THE ARCHIVE
AND THE (ART) MUSEUM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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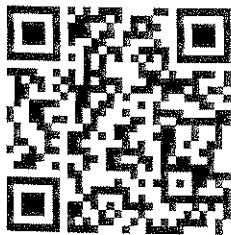ːwork art) constitute
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The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it: at most, were it not for the rarity of the documents, the greater chronological distance would be necessary to analyze it. And yet could this description of the archive be justified, could it elucidate that which makes it possible, map out the place where it speaks, control its rights and duties, test and develop its concepts … if it persisted in describing only the most distant horizons? … Should it not illuminate, if only in an oblique way, that enunciative field of which it is itself a part? (Foucault [1969]1992)

The *Media Art Platform* (MAP) project, as it is presented in this book, is first and foremost the result of an experiment that seeks to illuminate and renegotiate the enunciative field of the archive in the age of new media. The following essay discusses the role of the archive and the competences of museums in the new media landscape. This essay also considers the ways in which the archive is organized more frequently as a place where new slices of knowledge and history may appear and are generated.

Originally, MAP was conceived of as a way to create a curatorial open platform for a transdisciplinary exchange among many competences concerning the archive in general, but with an emphasis on the archive of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde (MFSK). This book sets forth the end result of two and one-half years of activities, but it also describes a process and framework for ongoing research. While exploring the MAP process, we did, however, encounter some fundamental issues concerning the archive, i.e., the museum, in the age of digital media. Last but not least, we also had to deal with the role of art in an "experience economy."

More about
Morten Søndergaard

The first part of MAP had several phases. First of all, we had to examine the archive at MFSK that holds art created since the 1950s, art that experiments innovatively with cross-sections of contemporary genres, technologies, and mediated art forms. Performative and intermedial art practices were especially important, and thus much of the archive contains the following: parts or elements of temporal art works; many variations of sound art (dating from the 1910s); video/film art; and documentation in texts, images, sounds, video, and film. The registration and physical archiving of this

collection posed complex problems that lay principally in the fact that, for the archive to give credit to the remarkable artistic profile it truly illuminates (in the sense of Foucault, above), it has to be navigable and "active." This is not only the problem of making the archive available to the general public, but, importantly, an issue that concerns the archive itself, the need to "map out the place where it speaks." In other words, we had to take up the additional idea that a platform that "tests and develops its concepts" should be constructed.

Digital technologies could make testing and development possible. But these technologies, it was clear to me, needed to be "qualified" into the "map" and "concept" of the archive. Furthermore, the digital technologies must make possible the archaeology of knowledge. In other words, it should be possible to experience both the map and the concept, activating the profile of MFSK.

At the same time that MAP was being designed by experimenting with new technologies, we also needed to set and confront our limitations. One of the earliest was the conscious avoidance of using the Internet and desktops. The project, now called the Media Art Platform for the first time, was not to be a parallel reality or "virtual" rendering of the "real" archive. Nor was it to be limited by the relatively commercial and standardized solutions that the Internet offers, including copyright and sound/film conversion formats.

On the other hand, the existence in the MFSK archive of many different media formats (evidence of different levels of media consciousness) had to be considered. The MAP was to use "new" media to activate and archive "old" media – two sides of the same coin – but how?

Very early in the process, four fruitful choices were made. MAP should: 1) Use the "luxury" of digital technology to build a navigable database that combined the entire "cloud" of data (works, documentation, registration, and metadata) in the archive; 2) Use the "luxury" of physical space when designing the actual "solutions" that would be made available to the public (and researchers); 3) Avoid the separation of digital and physical space but ensure that they complemented and validated each other, creating a situation where the archive is activated and made navigable; and 4) Ensure that the "solutions" made it possible for the general public

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to enjoy or experience the archive in a very immediate manner. It was necessary that the fourth objective lead almost immediately to the experience of more complex layers of experience and to an understanding[1] of the profile, or in Foucault's sense, "concept" of the MFSK archive.

Metaphorically speaking, other motivations were in play at this stage. First of all, the notion that the archive is "the border of time that surrounds our present" (Foucault [1969] 1992) played a major role in the development of the curatorial concept of MAP. As Foucault says, "The description of the archive deploys its possibili- ties (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to be ours." (Foucault [1969] 1992) Therefore, we were faced with one overarching question: How should MAP describe the MFSK archive by using digital media since it encompasses the discourse and epistemology of the ar- chive, now as well as in the past?

In attempt to answer the question of how to describe the MFSK archive, this book presents the theory, history, practice, and per- spectives of the MAP project from four angles, or optics, derived from the expanded digital field: the Transdisciplinary Setting, Mapping, Metadata, and Reactive Spaces, which are all important elements in the creation of a Digital Archive Experience. Instead of presenting answers, however, this book approaches these angles as a combination of new questions that may be asked, as well as presenting new methods that may be developed within the frame- work of multiple discourses on the museum.

The Digital Archive Experience
Of the many great tasks facing art museums in the future, two overshadow all: 1) How do museums solve the conundrum of hav- ing a (perceived) "unexciting" archive practice (which is the heart and backbone of any museum); and 2) How do museums reactivate their archives without making the museum into an entertaining business "experience" with "customers" rather than "visitors"?

Far from being "unexciting," the archive, as this essay will argue, that the archive has become the battleground of a cultural war between those who see culture as based on identity and those who sees it based on difference. As Boris Groys points out in his book *Logik der Sammlung – am ende des Musealen Zeitlaters* (1997, 86), the

disagreement is really about the status of innovation – in theory as
well as in practice – in cultural institutions and cultural production.

One could argue that the archive is one place that corporate capi-
talism – or any political or economical order – should not enter.
But the days are over when it was possible to place archival prac-
tice "outside" the cultural complex of everyday life and corporate
economy. For good or bad, you might argue, something new ap-
pears, and referring to the paradigms of the so-called "experience
economy" – including a great deal of new media business – carries
out most of the institutional navigation. The issue, then, becomes
how we should let the archive enter our "experience economy."
Should we institutionalize culture-as-identity into collected "can-
ons," or should we institute innovative practices in the form of
new structures and relations? This book recognizes the first path
as current practice in our cultural institutions but advocates the
latter as a viable strategy for the future. Thus, the digital archive
experience might define an entirely new level of cultural and social
production.

To reach a workable level of innovation, however, a number of
strategies are required. It may seem tempting to move toward
developing a canon or even to compete with the shopping mall
by copying corporate strategies. However, this would not only be
boring – you may see this in many museums already – it would also
be false. My MAP research has proven that corporate strategies
do not necessarily provide the best means of meeting or engaging
the public in a museum; and if corporate strategies are utilized,
they should run through a qualifying process of the digital archive
experience.

The important thing is to do something different, something
unexpected. You may draw inspiration from all layers of experience
– corporate, marketing, banking – but you may never use them
literally. You have to incorporate them into an idea that, above all,
does not rest upon economical rationality, but upon the rationality
of content matter. That, conceptually, always relies on difference
and change; this is what should be communicated, along with the
"energy" of the innovative cultural production of the archive.

MAP is first and foremost an archival practice that deliberately
experiments with the competences of digital media and both the
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"experience economy," the very existence of the new digital media also offers another paradigm that includes "digital experience" in a much-needed revision of the development and communication of identity in cultural institutions. Far from being about "amusing the public to death," cultural production incorporates many layers of experience (as well as perception and reception) and the digital archive experience that MAP orchestrates, above all, is about activating those layers.

The revision of cultural production also makes it possible for museums to play "dialectically" on the existence of a new critical public that follows the new media. This public is not, contrary to what many may think, entirely enthralled and driven by corporate culture; the new media culture is, first and foremost, diverse. Many strands are woven into a new paradigm that is changing institutional and conventional patterns, as well as changing the way in which cultural, social, and political "reality" is perceived and conceived.

So, the first great task – to bring the museum and institutional sphere into the digital dialectic – leads to these questions: How do museums enter the playground of this digital dialectic in the most effective way? How does the digital archive insert differences into the radical normative transformations of the deconstruction of the cultural industry as carried out by the global digital revolution? Can cultural institutions play both sides of the dialectic –*institutionalizing* normative representational patterns as well as *instituting* new paradigms – without losing the meaning of the archive?

Reactions

As I've already stated, this book focuses mainly on the digital archive experience as a reaction to the problems and possibilities facing the museum in the digital media age, which in turn help to construct the experience of the archive and the museum in radical ways. But the path is also marked with pitfalls: one of them, that the museum becomes a kind of "theme park," is more likely than the science-fictive trap, in which the museum dissolves into a "hybrid cultural information space."

Secondly, MAP creates a situation in which the landscape of the "hidden" archive and reactive digital media enter into that which has been termed an "enactive" process of perception: "Perception is not something that happens to us. It is something we do." (Noë

2004) So, the second reaction for which MAP is searching is that of the public. MAP is an activation of the public as actors on the stage of perception and reception. MAP should make the public aware of itself as **enactive**, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of history and the conceptual understanding of relationships among remote entities in physical as well as social, mental, and virtual information space.

Simple as this may sound it is, in fact, a complicated matter that involves rethinking the fundamentals of the archive as a "place" for conserving "things." But archives are much more than that. They are places for the documentation of ideas and strategies, as well as objects, and a place where information is treasured and stored for future use. The museum also holds a complex vault of differences in historical periods and styles. This is only passive and boring if we allow it to be (which either means that we do not care for it or that we are afraid of the dynamics of historic material in a monolithic age of fast-tracking historical "canons"). For a long time the archive, for different reasons, has been the not-so-hot little sister of museum activities. I will argue here that digital media places the archive at the very center of the future development of an innovative "institution" (maybe a museum, but maybe something else).

The idea, then, was to work with the archive in an innovative and experimental way, creating a physical, social, and mental information source that the public could use, literally, through bodily actions. This is the third reaction, then: the human body. MAP should be envisioned as a kind of laboratory situation, where the basics of the museum and the archive are reexamined from the viewpoint of a number of experimental theories and methods. These are largely, but not entirely, based on the development and cultural reception of new media and digital technology. However, there are, as we shall see, fundamental issues at stake (some of which are being reactivated by digital media issues). The first and the second reaction bring on a third and a fourth: 3) that of the archive as an innovative competence in the museum, and 4) a reactivation of history as a perceptive process rather than as a passive reception of things "conserved."

The Museum as Information Space
One of the key goals of MAP was to envision the museum as an "information space" or perhaps as an "information infrastructure" (Dourish & Bell 2008) – a physical, virtual, mental, and social

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space where information is stored, accessed, shared, and contextu-
alized. Instead of focusing on the obvious, the Internet, we wanted
to use the "luxury" of physical space in a digital setting. In this way,
MAP becomes an investigation not only of the museum-as-space
and the archive-as-information, but of that which Henri Lefebvre
calls "the production of space." (Lefebvre [1974] 1991)

In his classic book, Lefebvre argues that three kinds of paradigms
of "spaces" have existed in human thinking for the last five hun-
dred years or more without any interconnection (or notions of how
to blend them). The paradigms of space are the natural (physical),
mental, and social. We do not know what space is or how to "read"
it as a multilayered "reality." The problem, according to Lefebvre,
is that space and the coding of it have been reduced to formal mat-
ters and dualistic terminology. Space (and its coding), he argues,
is a dialectical matter. It involves that which he calls "a universal
notion": "production" and the "act of producing."

Instead of emphasizing the rigorously formal aspect of codes, I
shall instead be putting the stress on their dialectical character.
Codes will be seen as part of a practical relationship, as part of an
interaction between subjects and their space and surroundings. I
shall attempt to trace the coming-into-being and disappearance of
codings/decodings. My aim will be to highlight contents – i.e., the
social (spatial) practice inherent in the form under consideration.
(Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 49)

MAP connects two very different theories of perception, neither
of which, however, claims that perception is about experiencing
something. These theories focus on experience as a process, in
which a social space is produced by a dialectic exchange between
perceptive enactments and reenactments. This is the economy of
innovative experience.

The archive is a complex social space under production, with codes
from many layers of different spaces intermingling: the histori-
cal, mental, personal, scientific, cultural, artistic. Experiences are
produced actively by the public across those spaces. The modality
of MAP, then, consists of investigations into the navigation across
various spaces and layers of codes, and in the process asks a set
of new critical questions that highlight possibilities rather than
well-known solutions. At its outset, MAP is a thinking process with
some IDEAS about production that should become practice. MAP

asks: In what way would it be possible to map a physical archive
onto a digital space and make it navigable in a physical space?

Eventually, the goal of MAP is to envision the museum as "in-
formation space," where the archive may be navigated freely by
anyone across platforms. This includes the notion that the physical
framing of archives is dissolved, while the physical presentation
of archives is greatly intensified. These, in short, are the IDEAS
that constitute the theoretical framework of MAP and the digital
archive experience.

The following essays are about the REALITIES of producing an
actual digital archive experience. This is the production of MAP:
Media Art Platform. This volume is not, in any way, an attempt
to offer a complete catalogue of solutions to digital archiving.
Instead, it describes a way to work with the digital archive experi-
ence as a discourse between archive and experience and within
the critical framework of a digital dialectic and a transdisciplinary
practice. Further, this book describes the discussions and problems
involved in practicing (and thereby correcting) the IDEA of the
digital archive experience and the production of MAP as a naviga-
ble information space.

I now move on to discuss – in general and as a motivation for the
choice of working methods and solutions in MAP – the function
of the museum in the age of digital media as I define the crux of
our challenge: making competences matter in the new domains of
digital media and global culture.

New Domains and Competences
Writing in 2004 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of
Ars Electronica in Linz, Peter Weibel, German art historian and
director of ZKM in Karlsruhe, suggests that "a transdisciplinary
mapping of competences is taking place in the fields of art." He
continues:

> [...] The redistribution of competence ... is precisely the
> progressive status of the contemporary avant-garde: [...] its
> protagonists attempt to undertake new comparisons and redis-
> tributions of competence, and to make the transition from the
> formal level to the level of practice [...] Extension of compe-
> tence is the latest phase in the expansion of the concept of art.

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Art expands from the object to the practice and its practice ex-
pands from its field of work into new domains … (Weibel 2004)

What Peter Weibel is formulating (a reprint of this influential text
can be found in the next chapter[1]), is a framework for understand-
ing contemporary art practice that involves more than aesthetic
and formalistic research. There is much more at stake as the
competences of art and art institutions are being redistributed. In
fact, I would claim that Weibel not only describes art reality, but
marks out a general condition: Habitual and conventional domains
of knowledge and art are shattered and even dissolved, and in their
place new domains arise.

Thus, we are faced with the question of formulating qualitatively
new phenomena and inventing concepts and strategies to do so
on the fly, so to speak. The construction of new domains is based
on different competences that are actually working together, in a
dynamic exchange of solutions and differences. I will now take a
closer look at what those new domains could be and how the field
of competences within art, the organization of knowledge, and
institutions are changing because of them.

The Innovative Competences of the Archive
According to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, echoing
Michel Foucault (Foucault [1969] 1992), the archive is founded on
two ideas: First, the revolutionary and instituting idea that enables
the archive to change the framework and connecting cultural phe-
nomena into (new) identities; and secondly, traditional and con-
servative ideas since the museum at the same time is preserving not
only the institutions and (their new) identities, but also the cultural
patterns inherent in the society in which they are institutionalizing
themselves: "Archives are … Revolutionary and traditional. An ar-
chive is eco-nomic in this double sense: it keeps, it puts in reserve,
it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the
law (nomos) or in making people respect the law. (Derrida [1995]
1998)

Using Weibel's idea, I would like to move Derrida's into the field
of "competences" that is in play when producing the museum as
an information space. We should ask questions about the compe-
tences of a museum under production. To do so is also to ask about
the public – and what constitutes it – in the information space.

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The Instituting Competence

C'est donc aux rapport entre l'histoire et l'ethnologie as sens strict, que se ramène le débat. (Levi-Strauss [1958/1974] 1985, 30)
If we look at the modern archive competences from the public's viewpoint, the archive is, on the one hand, that which Boris Groys calls "die zeitalter des medien" – "the age of media" (Groys 1997); and on the other hand, that which Levi-Strauss says lies at the crossroads of the history and in the social space of the modern public. This is what Levi-Strauss terms the "debate" (Levi-Strauss [1958/1974] 1985). Groys, echoing Foucault (Foucault [1969] 1992) and Derrida ([1995] 1998), claims that art in a media culture not only causes the emergence of new aesthetic paradigms, but motivates the infusion of a new "logic" and "epistemology" into our concepts of reality and cultural patterns. Thus, representation systems are amplified, leading gradually to a conservation of the archive function in actions that exist mostly outside the social space of cultural production and consciousness.

Since the World War II, the focus in museums has been on conservation, to the point where it has almost obscured the instituting competence of the museum. Conservation, documentation, research, and registration are the competences of institutionalization. But they are no longer enough. Historical developments in the 1960s and 1970s have reshaped art. Some artists have stressed mass consumption. Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol are among the most significant in that regard. In their works, the object no longer is the foundation of representation but points toward the possibility to create art without objects using other strategies instead: performance art, conceptual art, processual art, environmental art, digital art, mail art, and others.

So, in a sense, we are left with an anthropological debate about the competence of art, institutions, and the public in the production of social space. It is not exactly a debate about structure, but it encompasses the question of the role we want history and the dialectic experience economy to play in the future of our society and culture.

Museums, in a sense, are an augmentation of a certain category of space production, a way to organize knowledge that has been constructed by the IDEAL of learning as the foundation of an enlightened (and sometimes democratic) society. In that sense, we think of a museum primarily as a "church for objects" because, as Boris

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Groys points out, the museum is the place where modern sub-jectivity is manifested in its most immediate form. The museum gives us a moment of pure insight and is the place where the line between art and non-art is drawn. That is why museums are inter-esting to investigate further as the question of new constructions of reality arises. What happens to the "old" competences when (that which Groys explains is a) space for free expression and the place where the limits between art and non-art disappear? (Groys 1997)

MAP seizes upon the fact that the age of media is changing into an age of digital media. The challenges raised by a digital media culture bring up the question of how media awareness is augment-ing the modern public/political space. Jürgen Habermas saw the modern public space as founded by (and caught up in) a literary awareness that functions as a common ground for judgments and cultural validation in the public sphere as well as in politics and art. (Habermas 1962, 97) The question in the age of digital media is how the construction of the public sphere is changing when the common ground is founded in new media awareness?

To summarize: MAP is a functional and philosophical inquiry into the digital dialectic of new media awareness; MAP translates this dialectic into the production of a reactive information space. The domains and competences of the public sphere, social spaces, art practice and art institutions are under constant production; they are involved in a process where the redistribution and negotiations of those competences and new domains for research and knowl-edge happens. But what does that include? What constitutes a reactive information space?

A Turning Point for the Museum?
Museums have reached the turning point at which they need to reactivate their other competence: instituting new epistemologi-cal structures. Museums need to highlight this hidden competence and begin producing spaces and codes in the area that lies between the physical, the social, the mental, and digital spaces.

In the context of MAP, this activity becomes metaphorical and conceptual framing: not solutions, but challenges to the traditional museum AND to the ideas of the "new museum." MAP is not a final product that merely shows the archive in a digital representa-tion or version. Instead, MAP is best regarded as an information space under production; a transdisciplinary work-in-progress

where all the elements of the archive – registration, documentation, objects – are activated to make the archive navigable so that it may produce a new dialectical space within the physical, mental, and social spaces. This becomes the information space that contains both digital and analogue information.

Obviously, what makes this possible is not only digital media, but also the conceptual paradigms of the digital dialectic and the production of new transdisciplinary domains. The real challenge, then, is to instigate a dialectical process between the two competences of the museum, to create a new domain where the archive may be experienced in and as space under construction, but also where the archive is reactivated as a repository for future use. Reactive media, the digital database, and distribution technology create the possibility to do just that... and the REALITY of a digital archive experience comes a step closer.

Producing Experience Spaces between Human and Computer
At the center of the production of a dialectical information space is "the public"; now, the question about interface and interaction arises. With MAP we wanted to focus on the "luxury of physical space" – especially as it applies to the interface between the digital and analogue layers in the archive – as well as on the question of how to navigate the collection. The archive not only encompasses "art works" or the derivations of "art," but documentation and relics from performative or mediated art events, sound art, etc., and an enormous amount of metadata.

We thought of MAP as an augmentation of the museum space, and thus wanted to create a situation that explores the ways in which experience interacts with knowledge, and how that interaction, in turn, creates interfaces between the different layers of space. In computer science, the term Human-Computer Interaction, HCI, is used when studying this from the practical-technical side (with a long developmental history). However, the issues addressed in MAP are not technical (although some of the solutions might be), but are actually questions of interface design.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the notion of the embodied mind and conceptual integration as structuring principles of knowledge were formulated (Johnson 1986; Turner 1999). In the last decade, the ideas of the embodied mind, bodily-based rationality, and cognition based upon physical and bodily active relations with the sur-

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rounding world have entered the stage of artistic as well as aesthet-
ic research. Paul Dourish argues that the Foundation of Embodied
Interaction wants to nourish the perspective that sees "the embod-
ied practical action in the world as the foundation of our conscious
experience" in this kind of research. (Dourish 2002, 12)

The digital archive experience in MAP is a transdisciplinary explo-
ration of the possibilities and limits of Human-Computer Interac-
tion, the function of conceptual integration, and the embodied
practical action of art and art experience. It is also a structural
combination of circuits that have been divided along traditional
lines: the fusion of the performing mind and a technological body,
conceptual sensing and media consciousness, and last but not least
the circuit activated by a public that is ever more active in the crea-
tion of (that which we understand as) art.

The creation of a digital archive experience is totally dependant
on three levels of activity: the database (digital information space);
the conceptual and bodily experienced integrations of the pub-
lic; and temporality. But the digital archive is also a way to focus
on, be aware of, and work with, the world and the media and the
people in the world, in a reactive way. The digital archive experi-
ence should be understood and investigated as an expansion of
HCI and embodied interaction, a way to increase media awareness
in the public domain. Historically, we can define certain stages in
media art practice: early media awareness (before HCI); late media
awareness (the dawn of HCI); intermedia awareness (using HCI
and media consciousness conceptually); and new (or digital) media
awareness (investigation or the strategic use of HCI). (Søndergaard
[2007] 2009) These are not historic periods, but phases that art
has embraced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For the
most part, these processes are still active today. What is even more
important to emphasize in the context of MAP is that these phases
are all represented – and active – in the MFSK archive.

Mapping – Physical, Digital, Social, Mental:
CONTEXT: DATABASE
Apart from the transdisciplinary redistribution of competences,
three main features dominate the reactive information space as a
social reality under production: mapping, metadata, and the "reac-
tive space." I will elaborate upon these features using examples
from the MAP project and the TOTAL_AKTION exhibition. The

latter was structured around these principles, as is the case with this book.

A common denominator should be mentioned: All three features grow out of a strategic HCI awareness. This creates a special new focus on the dialectic of space production. However, this dialectic is not defined by one or two authoritative levels, but is negotiated in a social information space, a new distributed public sphere that I postulate exists (so, may be produced). MAP is a social information space. The social information space is a construction that makes a digital archive experience possible. Mapping is the one strategy that best fits this production of experience.

As Lev Manovich (2002) makes clear in another section of this book, mapping is many things. On the physical level, it is the diagrammatic representation of the geographical world on a two-dimensional screen or page. Although this is a practical function, it is also, on another level, a visible proof of the semiotic relationship between the physical world and our knowledge of it. On a cognitive level, then, another kind of mapping is taking place. This might be termed a mental mapping, but it is instead a kind of conceptual mapping of that which the eye sees and the ears hear. Maps (of countries, cities, etc.) and the language we use to describe the physical world exist already in a representational relationship. Our knowledge may be described as the circulation of physical, mental, and conceptual representations that are mapped onto each other in something, which – inspired by Lefebvre – could be termed a processual production of social space.

This function of mapping is applied, if not directly then functionally, to the digital space of the database. However, here the actual mapping is not happening between physical and mental representations but between mathematical and computational representations of data.

MAP shows how this digital space may be mapped onto a social space by applying, functionally, the methods of physical, mental, and conceptual mapping. This is not new. Historically, there have been three main theories about how this enhancement, or interaction, of digital spaces in a human sphere may take place. First, we note Weiser's concept of the ubiquitous computer, the invisible but ubiquitous (and passively surveillant) computer in everyday functional spaces such as the kitchen or airport. Secondly, we have

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the processual idea of pervasive computing, computing power available to humans, and actively penetrating physical spaces and public spheres, as with mobile technology. Finally, I note the concept of HCI as a tangible interaction with sharp phenomenological undertones (Paul Dourish and others), where the introduction of the computer into the human sphere takes place within the context of the body and embodiment.

MAP seeks to produce a social information space where all three theories are present and active, but also a space that is more tangible and less pervasive or ubiquitous in its actual solutions. Researchers at the ACM site maintain that the combinatory element is "reality-based interaction." This notion is interesting, because it takes into consideration the "other side" of the equation: a human-based reality. The social information space is not only an injection of a digital space (the database) into actual space, but is as much an augmentation of the foundation of that space. Thus, the digital space creates a situation where the actual production of space becomes visible and tangible.

This question is closely connected to the examination of how (and perhaps why) contemporary art defines itself beyond aesthetics and beyond the realm (or reservation) of "art." The question is dialectic, rather than interpretative: Is the digital status of the archive an indication of a certain role in or a function of art, that of experience? Or does the status of the archive create a contextual – or even a social – practice that, once again, places the receiver at the center of attention and the creation of meaning? Does the experience of the digital archive instigate qualitatively new phenomena? Or is it merely a new expression of something as old as art itself: the question of how art relates to reality?

Once again, MAP is investigating the relationship of art and reality; perhaps new media is just another term (or excuse) for getting that old show on the road under the pretext and inspiration of technology, naturally. But a transdisciplinary dialectic is at play in the formation of the digital archive experience. The practice of archiving is an activity that is not new but innovative – and I almost expressed it already: It is not just a concept, not just another term for art trying to grasp reality (because then it would be reducible to a discussion of mimesis or representational strategies, which it is not). It is as much the other way around: The archive uses real-

ity discourses to investigate and produce new spaces for art and
knowledge.

The competences of traditional institutions and genres, indeed
the epistemology of those competences, are changing. We get new
domains and new competences and an inversion of institutions and
the public space. Reality, art, and art institutions are under con-
struction. In the middle of this construction site we find the artist
in a new role: mediator.

(Curating) The Artist as Mediator – Producing the MAP

The examples that I have used in my investigation so far are "raw"
in the sense that they play an incomplete part in my argumenta-
tion. They represent thoughts, ideas, and strategies that inform the
practices of the artists as mediators. The examples do not by any
means provide an in-depth analysis of all the art works in ques-
tion, nor do they constitute any elements of an "art history." That
would require the field to be transparent in its totality or, even
worse, would require that I generate the notion that what I am
examining is limited to the field of "art."

I wanted to point out how artists as mediators investigate and use
the new domains and competences preset in the public/politi-
cal spaces of the new media culture, and how they challenge the
cultural institutions of our society. However, there is no doubt
that some of the new practices and domains will also require new
institutions or something that we have not seen yet.

That being said, I find that certain key features of the concept of
the mediator should be mentioned here. First of all, the precur-
sors: McKenzie Wark investigated the "hacker" (Wark, *The Hacker
Manifesto*, 2002) and "the gamer" (Wark, *The Gamer*, 2007) as the
personas of digital culture. Wark asks the key question: What kind
of critical cultural production would follow the novelist of the
nineteenth century and the filmmaker of the twentieth? Where
the hacker, according to Wark Mckenzie, is the radical and, maybe
even avant-gardist of digital culture, the gamer is the dreamer of
a "reality" with rules that (most probably) will never apply to life
itself. Other important precursors of the mediator are the "raw"
(and the cooked) by Claude Levi-Strauss ([1958/1974] 1985); and
the "flaneur" that walks the pages as well as the streets of Charles
Baudelaire's books. The idea of the completely modern artist and

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the notion of the "avant-gardist" may be seen as mediators of their time, on some level.

MAP is a transdisciplinary project that is based intentionally upon a dialectical (and gentle) "war" of very different competences. But that does not change the fact that this dialectical war is the critical backdrop of the MAP project. Since MAP is based on a dialogue between (very) different positions, it was collectively based: the production-process centered on a group of people sharing positions, ideas, and differences. This group was comprised of theoreticians, programmers, designers, curators, and media artists. Inside the group everyone revealed their own background and ways of working for discussion. This was challenging for everyone, but mostly, for the artists.

Subject matter apart, the task facing the group was to transform an art collection, of which not one single work was digital, into a digitally preserved, registered, accessible, and tangible environment. In other words, the goal was to create a digital archive experience that combines the better of two worlds: the digital and the physical, the "old" archive culture and the new digital culture.

The task is linked to much greater issues. Creating a digital archive experience challenges the modern idea of the museum, and hence the very ideas of modernity itself. It is preformulating a new domain for art and the archive – the expanded digital field. Finally, the digital archive also raises the necessity of thinking about transformative creativity in completely new ways, encompassing radical new modalities of organization and strategy in a project where the mindset is mostly transdisciplinary. Practice is focused on the negotiations of different competences and ideas. The difference between ways of doing and ways of thinking is the key to a radical transformative element in the creative process: It is a space-producing practice, a practice that elevates the levels of the archive's constructed and discursive reality into an innovative social information space.

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I. TRANSDISCIPLINARY SETTINGS
The Digital Archive Experience
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